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EW BOYS

AT LIGHTHOUSE COVE

FREDERICK GORDON

To Jr
from Aunt Nelle
Xmas 1926.

NAS
Gordon

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They crowded to the rail eager for their rescue.

FAIRVIEW BOYS AT LIGHT-HOUSE COVE

OR

CARRIED OUT TO SEA

BY

FREDERICK GORDON pseud.

AUTHOR OF "FAIRVIEW BOYS AFLOAT AND ASHORE," "FAIRVIEW BOYS AND THEIR RIVALS," "FAIRVIEW BOYS AT CAMP MYSTERY," ETC.

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BOOKS FOR BOYS

BY FREDERICK GORDON

FAIRVIEW BOYS SERIES

Illustrated. Price, per volume, 75 cents, postpaid.

FAIRVIEW BOYS AFLOAT AND ASHORE
Or, The Young Crusoes of Pine Island

FAIRVIEW BOYS ON EAGLE MOUNTAIN
Or, Sammy Brown's Treasure Hunt

FAIRVIEW BOYS AND THEIR RIVALS
Or, Bob Bouncer's Schooldays

FAIRVIEW BOYS AT CAMP MYSTERY
Or, The Old Hermit and His Secret

FAIRVIEW BOYS AT LIGHTHOUSE COVE
Or, Carried Out to Sea

FAIRVIEW BOYS ON A RANCH
Or, Riding with the Cowboys

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Fairview Boys At Lighthouse Cove

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SEP 24 1940

Made in U. S. A.

Fairview Boys at Lighthouse Cove

OR

CARRIED OUT TO SEA

CHAPTER I

VACATION PLANS

"LAST day of school; hurray!"

"No more lessons! No more books!"

"Nothing but fun, from now on! I say, Frank, catch Sammy; he's going to fall!"

Three boys were standing together in the school yard, making merry over the coming of the Summer vacation. The last one who spoke was a jolly-looking lad, with a gleam of mischief in his eyes. Suddenly he put out his foot, caught it around the ankle of one of his companions, and gently pushed him over backwards.

"Catch Sammy, Frank!" he cried, and the other boy grasped the toppling one just in time.

"I told you so!" cried the fun-loving lad, as he sprang to one side.

"Look here, Bob Bouncer, what do you mean by that?" demanded the one who had been pushed, as he stood upright again. "What did you do that for?" and he started toward his companion.

"Oh, it was only a joke," answered the one who had been called Bob Bouncer. "I wanted to have some fun. I feel

just full of fun when I think what good times I'm going to have this Summer."

"Huh! just because you feel good you needn't knock me all around," went on Sammy Brown. But, though he spoke a bit crossly he could not help smiling at Bob, who was making funny faces, and dancing about, just out of reach.

"I didn't hurt you," cried Bob, who was generally "cutting-up," or thinking up some joke to play on his chums. "I waited until Frank was there to catch you before I shoved you."

"Humph! You're getting mighty thoughtful, all of a sudden," said Bob. "What about it, Frank?"

"That's right," answered the third lad. "I didn't know what he meant when he said I was to catch you, for you were going to fall. Let up, Bob, can't you?"

"Yes, I won't do anything more—right away. But say, have you fellows made any plans for this Summer?"

"Oh, I s'pose the folks'll go way as they always do," said Frank. "My father was talking about some place in the mountains."

"Near a lake?" asked Bob.

"I don't believe so. I didn't hear much about it."

"Then I wouldn't go," said Sammy. "I want to be near the water. We're going to a cottage near a big mountain lake, I think."

"That sounds good!" cried Frank. "I wish we were going near a lake. I want to learn to sail a boat the right way this year."

"Yes, then we won't have any more shipwrecks, the way we did when we went out in the *Puff,*" laughed Bob.

"Where are your folks going?" asked Frank, of the lad who had pushed Sam into his arms.

"To the seashore for ours! It's the first time since I was a

little fellow, and I'm going to have lots of fun. We're going on a sort of cove, where there's still-water swimming, and lots of fishing and crabbing. Not far off, is the regular ocean, but of course I won't be allowed to do much swimming in that. I can hang on the bathing ropes, though. Oh, I'm going to have some great times all right!"

Bob Bouncer's two chums looked rather enviously at him. He seemed to be going to have the best time that Summer vacation.

About the three boys was gathered a crowd of other school children. There was laughter, talk, and various kinds of excitement, for it was the last day of the term, and, after some simple exercises, the building would be closed for the long vacation.

Because of this, discipline was a little relaxed. It was a little past the regular opening hour, but the principal, Mr. Tetlow, did not want to mark any one tardy on that last day, so he told the janitor not to be in too much of a hurry to ring the bell.

On all sides were heard questions,

"Did you pass?"

"Where are you going this Summer?"

"Oh, did you hear about Henry Black?"

"No, what about him?"

"Why, he didn't pass again. This is the third time he'll be in the fifth grade."

"Oh, isn't that too bad! But you know he won't study."

"No, he's too fond of fun."

"Who are you talking about; Bob Bouncer?" asked someone who had just come into the yard.

"No, Henry Black."

"Oh, him! Say, isn't it time we went in? I've got to speak a piece."

"I'm glad I don't have to. I'm only in the chorus."

And so it went on, boys and girls from the higher grammar grades down to the kindergarten, talking and laughing together.

Finally, when the last of the straggling pupils had reached the school, the bell was rung, calling them into the big auditorium, where the closing exercises would be held. These would be over about noon, and there would be no other session.

After the usual exercises, singing, and the reading from the Bible, Mr. Tetlow said that there would be music and declamation. That last was a word the smaller pupils used but little. They called it "speaking pieces."

Nellie Somers was in the midst of declaiming a sad little piece about a boy who had lost his pocketbook. She recited the line:

"Where, oh, where, is Donald's money?"

And then, suddenly, as she paused for a moment, Bob Bouncer said in a shrill whisper:

"Fellows, I've got it!"

Instantly there was laughter, and poor Nellie, up on the platform, blushed and was unable to go on. All eyes were shifted to Bob, who turned red, and the principal, rising suddenly, looked sternly at the lad.

"Who said that?" he asked, sharply.

"I—I did, sir," stammered Bob.

"Why did you do it? Did you want to make trouble, and cause Nellie to feel badly—saying you had the pocketbook she spoke of?"

"No, sir. I didn't mean anything about a pocketbook. I wasn't even listening to what Nellie said."

"Then why did you speak? What did you mean when you said, so we all could hear you, that you had it?"

Bob looked first at Frank, and then at Sammy. They, too, were wondering what he had meant by speaking aloud in school, especially during the closing exercises.

"I—I meant that I had an—idea," went on Bob, blushing redder than before.

"Well," said Mr. Tetlow, "perhaps you meant no wrong, but the next time you get an idea, please don't announce it to the whole school that way, and interrupt the proceedings." He was smiling now, and Bob knew he was forgiven.

Bob was usually a pretty good boy in school, and the principal realized this, for a thing like that had never happened before. Bob's explanation was accepted, and, as it was the last day, Mr. Tetlow did not want to punish him.

"Steady now! Quiet down!" said Mr. Tetlow to the pupils, for many of them showed signs of laughter again. "We will overlook it this time, Bob, but don't do it again. You may go on, Nellie. I think Bob is sorry he interrupted you."

"Yes, sir, I am," said Bob, earnestly.

Nellie smiled down at him, for he and she were good friends. Then she finished reciting her piece, and was applauded, and the rest of the exercises went on. Then came the giving of diplomas to those who were to graduate from the grammar department.

This was followed by the awarding of some prizes, and certificates of good conduct, and for prompt and punctual attendance. Then, with a final song by the whole school, the program ended.

"School is dismissed, until the middle of September!" announced Mr. Tetlow, and with happy faces the children marched out to a lively tune, played by Miss Williams, one of the teachers.

In the yard there was more talk and laughter, as the boys and girls started for their homes.

"Did you hear what Bob Bouncer said?"

"Sure! We all did!"

"Wasn't he terrible?"

"And how awful Nellie must have felt! I was real sorry for her."

"So was I. Bob was scared too, I guess."

Thus Bob's companions talked about him.

Frank and Sammy made their way through the crowd to the side of their chum.

"Say, what in the world was the matter with you?" demanded Frank.

"Were you talking in your sleep?" Sammy wanted to know.

"No, I wasn't," answered Bob, quickly. "It was just as I told Mr. Tetlow. I suddenly got an idea, and, before I knew it, I popped out and said it. I didn't even know Nellie was speaking, as I was thinking of something else."

"What was it?" asked Frank.

"Yes, you may as well tell us, now that you went that far," added Sammy.

"Well, it was an idea about our Summer vacation," went on Bob. "Our folks are going to the seashore, you know, and I don't see any reason why you fellows can't come too."

"There are two good reasons," said Frank. "I have one, and Sammy has the other."

"None of our folks are going to the shore," said Sammy. "I wish we were, though, for we could have lots of fun together. Now we'll be a couple of hundred miles apart," he added, in disappointed tones.

"And that's just what my idea is about!" exclaimed Bob. "There's no use in us being separated. Look here, fellows,

our folks are going to take a big cottage at the shore. It's too big a house for us, for I heard mom say so. But we couldn't get a smaller one. But I'm glad of it, for now there's going to be room for you two fellows. So why can't you come to the shore with me?"

"That would be swell!" cried Frank.

"It sure would," agreed Sammy. "But would our folks let us?"

"The only way to find out is to ask!" declared Bob quickly. "Come on, I'll go around with you and we'll see if they won't let you fellows go."

"First you'd better find out if your mother will want us," suggested Frank, who was quite practical, at times.

"Yes, we don't want to invite ourselves," put in Sammy. "My mother will be sure to ask first what your mother said, Bob."

"All right, then, we can go around to my house, and I'll ask mom. But I know she will want to have you. Say, maybe we won't have some good times together this Summer!"

"Where are you going?" asked Frank.

"To a place called Lighthouse Cove. There's a lighthouse there, and dangerous rocks, a bay, and——"

"Any pirate treasure buried there?" asked Sammy, quickly.

"Ho! Ho! Listen to him!" cried Frank. "There he goes again, making up a mystery before he's even seen the place."

"Well, there might be pirate gold!" cried Sammy, stoutly.

"And you can have a hunt for it, if you'll only come," said Bob.

"Oh, I'll be sure to come if the folks will let me," replied Sammy. "Come on, let's hurry."

The three boys left their other school companions behind,

and hastened on toward Bob's house. As Bob had said she would, his mother readily agreed to the plan of having Sammy and Frank go to the seashore cottage with the Bouncer family.

"Mr. Bouncer and I will be very glad to have you," she said to Sammy and Frank. "You will be company for Bob, and I won't have to amuse him so much. Come, by all means. I'll write notes to each of your mothers, inviting you, and then they'll know it will be all right."

The notes were soon ready, and Frank and Sammy, accompanied by Bob, set off for the homes of the two chums, to get the desired permission.

"Let me know whether or not you can go," Mrs. Bouncer called after Frank and Sammy.

"We will!" they chorused.

"And if you do go, be sure to bring picks and shovels to dig for the pirate gold," she added, with a smile.

"What's that!" cried Sammy, eagerly, and he started back on the run toward Mrs. Bouncer, who stood in the doorway of her house.

CHAPTER II

AT LIGHTHOUSE COVE

"HERE, where are you going, Sammy?"

"Come back here, we want to get this thing settled!"

Thus Frank and Bob called after their chum, who was headed toward where Mrs. Bouncer still stood on the steps.

"I'm going to find out about that pirate gold!" answered Sammy, never turning around.

"There he goes again!" cried Bob. "I wonder what mother meant by saying that? She never told me about any pirates."

"Maybe we'd better go back and see," suggested Frank. "We'll never get the straight of it from Sammy."

"All right, I'm with you," said Bob, and the two followed their chum.

And while they are thus trying to get at the meaning of the remark made by Mrs. Bouncer I will take just a few minutes to tell my new readers something about the three chums and their friends, as well as about their adventures, which I have set down in the other books of this series,

The first volume was named "Fairview Boys Afloat and Ashore; Or, The Young Crusoes of Pine Island." In that I told how Frank Haven, Sammy Brown and Bob Bouncer went sailing in the *Puff,* how the craft was wrecked, and how the boys had to live on Pine Island for some days before they were rescued.

"Fairview Boys on Eagle Mountain; Or, Sammy Brown's Treasure Hunt," was the name of the second book, and in that you can read how Sammy, in looking through an old trunk in the attic, discovered a curious document. It told of treasure, and he and his two chums at once set off for Eagle Mountain to discover it.

In the third book, called "Fairview Boys and their Rivals; Or, Bob Bouncer's Schooldays," the chums had a different form of excitement. There was a fire in the school and a jewelry store robbery. How the stolen things were finally recovered, and what part Bob Bouncer had in it, you will find set down in the book.

Then came the fourth volume, called "Fairview Boys at Camp Mystery; Or, The Old Hermit and His Secret." In that the boys had an invitation to visit an old hunter, who lived on a part of Pine Island they had never explored.

Almost as soon as they reached the island the boys discovered a curious aged hermit, who seemed very angry at them. They also found a mysterious room, in an old mansion, and what they found there, how they were startled by an explosion, and what the old hermit's secret was—all that you will find written down in the fourth book.

The boys spent most of the Christmas vacation on Pine Island, and now winter was over, Spring had come and gone, Summer was at hand, and they were ready for warm weather vacation fun.

I might add just a line or two about the boys themselves. Frank Haven was a straightforward, every-day kind of chap, with many likeable qualities. He was a sort of leader for the other two, they generally looking to him for advice.

Bob Bouner, as you have probably guessed, was a "cut-up." He liked jokes and fun, but was never mean in them. He could never resist playing tricks when he got the chance.

Sammy Brown was a queer chap. He was fond of reading stories of adventures in strange countries, and he loved books on treasure hunting. And it finally became so that, on the slightest chance, he would imagine that he, himself, might one day discover a gold or diamond mine, or stumble on some mysterious horde of pirate gold.

Once, as the readers of my other books know, Sammy did start on a treasure hunt. It had an unexpected ending. And again Sammy was sure he had discovered, on Pine Island, a band of men who made counterfeit money. I leave you to find out for yourself what it really was he came across.

The boys lived in the town of Fairview, on the shores of Rainbow Lake, a large body of water, containing many islands, the largest of them being Pine.

Bob and his two chums had many friends. They went to the same school, were in the same class, and were so often together that it was strange to see one of them out alone.

They usually spent their Summer vacations together, and this was the first time, in some years, that there was a prospect of parting. But Bob believed he had gotten up a plan that would avoid this. It was this plan which was about to be put to the test on this last day of school.

"Wait a minute; can't you, Sammy?" called Bob to his chum, who was hurrying toward Mrs. Bouncer. "Don't go so fast. My mother isn't going to run away."

"I guess maybe he thinks someone else will get ahead of him, and find that pirate gold," suggested Frank. "It's queer your mother never told you about it."

"Maybe it's a joke,' said Bob. "Ma likes to have fun with us, once in a while."

Sammy kept on until he stood in front of Bob's mother. Then he burst out with:

"What's that you said about a pirate, Mrs. Bouncer? Is

there really one at Lighthouse Cove? If there is I'm going to have a hunt for his gold. Did he hide it in a cave, or bury it on the beach? And is there an old map of it, drawn in blood?"

Sammy Brown's eyes were shining with eagerness.

"Oh, what a funny boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Bouncer, with a laugh. "I never expected you would take me up so quickly."

"Why, is it a joke, ma?" asked Bob.

"I don't know whether it is or not," Mrs. Bouncer replied, and she did not smile this time. "I really don't know why I mentioned it," she went on. "It slipped out before I knew it."

"Then there is really pirate gold there; is there?" asked Bob.

"Oh, as to that I can't say. You see, boys, it's this way. I did not intend to speak of it to you, Bob, until we got there, for I didn't want any excitement. But, since it slipped from me, I'll tell you all I know.

"When I went down to Lighthouse Cove, in the Spring, to see about hiring a cottage for the Summer, I met an old sailor who had charge of some of the places that were shut up for the Winter. After looking at several cottages I picked out one named 'Barnacle.' It was a little too large, but it was in an ideal spot, right in the centre of the cove shore. It is lovely there, and near the lighthouse.

"Well, I was talking to this old sailor, whose name is Hamp Salina, and I asked him if Lighthouse Cove was a good place for a lively boy to have fun—I was thinking of you, Bob."

"What did he say?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Well, he said it was the finest spot a boy could wish for, and if everything else failed to amuse him, he could spend his time digging for the pirate gold. I asked him what he meant,

and he said there was a rumor that one of the old-time freebooters had come ashore at Lighthouse Cove once, and buried part of his ill-gotten treasure there."

"Did you ask him where it was buried?" asked Sammy, eagerly.

"Oh, yes, but Hamp said he didn't know, and no one else did, though at different times many persons had dug for the gold."

"Did they find any?" asked Frank.

"Never, so the old sailor said. I'm sorry, now, that I mentioned it, for you boys won't do anything else but look for it, I'm afraid."

"We surely will have a try for it!" declared Sammy, earnestly.

"That's what!" exclaimed Bob.

"We'll have to get on the right side of Hamp Salina," said Frank. "Maybe he knows more than he's told."

"Well, don't count too much on it, and then you won't be disappointed," advised Mrs. Bouncer, with a smile. "You'd best run along now, Frank and Sammy, and see if your parents will let you come with Bob."

"If my folks don't let me go," said Sammy, slowly, as he thought of the chance of the pirate's treasure, "if they won't let me go, I—I won't go with them. I'll stay here in Fairview all Summer."

"And so will I!" cried Frank. "But I'm sure they'll let us."

Frank proved to be a good prophet. When Mrs. Haven and Mrs. Brown had read the notes written by Mrs. Bouncer, inviting the boys to Barnacle Cottage, they at once gave their consents. As Mrs. Brown said to Mrs. Haven:

"We'd never have any peace with our boys if they were alone with us, at the places to which we are going. They'd much better be together."

"I think so, too," said Mrs. Haven.

So it was arranged, and Sammy and Frank were wild with delight.

"I can go!" shouted Sammy, as he came rushing out of the house, after his mother had consented. "I can go, Bob!"

"That's fine!"

"And we'll get that pirate gold!" added Frank, with a grin as he came out of his house to give the good news that he, too, could go.

"We'll, if we don't, we'll have fun anyhow," said Bob, who never had much faith in the wild plans of Sammy Brown.

"Oh, we'll get it!" declared Sammy. "All we need to do is to discover the right place and dig."

"Yes, discover it the way you discovered the treasure on Eagle Mountain!" laughed Bob.

"Oh, well, something came of that!" declared Sammy, in some confusion.

"Yes, something," admitted Bob, "but not what you expected. Now let's begin packing."

It was some days yet before the journey to Lighthouse Cove would be made, but the boys were so eager that they began to get ready at once.

Finally they did start. It was half a day's journey from Fairview to the seashore, and Lighthouse Cove was reached about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Bouncer, the servants, and the three boys drove up from the station in a large carriage.

"There's the cottage!" exclaimed Mrs. Bouncer, pointing to a large one a little way up from the beach of the cove. "Yes, and there's old Hamp to welcome us."

"What, the sailor who knows about the pirate gold?" cried Sammy. "I must see him at once!" And, without waiting for the carriage to stop, he gave a flying leap out of it.

"I can go", shouted Tommy.

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CHAPTER III

SAMMY GETS A CLUE

"WHAT a boy!" cried Mr. Bouncer, in dismay.

"He'll be hurt! Stop the carriage!" exclaimed Mrs. Bouncer.

"Not a bit of it, ma'am!" grunted the old man who was driving the horses. "Boys never get hurt. They always land on their feet, like cats, ma'am. He's all right—there he goes," he added, looking over the side of the carriage.

He had, however, pulled up the horses, who came to a stop. Then Mr. and Mrs. Bouncer could see that Sammy was indeed all right. He was running across the sand toward an aged man who was seated on an overturned boat, not far from the Bouncer Cottage.

"Is that the sailor who told you about the pirate gold?" Bob wanted to know.

"Yes," said his mother, "but——"

"Come on!" cried Bob to Frank. "We can't let Sammy get ahead of us on this. May we go, Mother?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," she sighed, with a look at her husband, who smiled and nodded. "We can unpack better if you boys are out of the house, anyhow," she added. "But don't be gone too long."

"Only long enough to find out about the pirate treasure," answered Bob, as he and Frank got out of the carriage to run after Sammy, who was already close to the old sailor.

"Wait—wait for us!" called Bob to his chum, and though Sammy was in a great hurry, he felt that, as he was the guest of Bob, it would be no more than polite to halt until he and Frank came up. Then, together, the three chums approached the old sailor, who was sitting calmly on the overturned boat, smoking a short pipe.

"Good-afternoon," greeted Bob.

"Arternoon!" mumbled the old man. "Are you the Bouncer boys?" he asked, turning to look at the carriage, that was drawing up at Barnacle Cottage.

"I'm one of 'em," answered Bob. "These are my chums."

"Hum! I thought your mother said, when she come down to rent that cottage, that she had three boys."

"Oh, she says that because we're always together," explained Frank. "My mother says the same thing."

"Hum!" mused the old sailor. "Well, I'm glad to see you. I likes young people—'specially boys. They make a place a bit lively, and it's dull enough here all Winter. In Summer the cottagers come, and then it ain't so bad. I used to be a sailor but now I fish and rent boats," he went on, "and if you're going to hire one for the season I'll let you have a good one."

"Oh, we'll be sure to want a boat," Bob said, "but I guess my father will pick it out."

Sammy, by nods and winks, had been trying to signal to Bob to ask some questions about the treasure, and Bob, knowing that Sammy was anxious to hear what there was in the story, said:

"My friend here, Sammy Brown, wants to ask you some questions, Mr. Salina."

"Fire away!" invited the old fisherman. "I've got a little time yet 'fore I go treading for clams. What is it?"

"About the pirate treasure!" exclaimed Sammy, eagerly.

Mrs. Bouncer said you told her about it. Where is it—we'd like to dig for it!"

The old man did not answer for a few seconds. He was too busily engaged in chuckling silently. He chuckled so hard that he took a wrong breath on his pipe, some smoke went down his throat, and he coughed and spluttered so wildly that the boys thought he was having a fit. But finally he regained control of his breathing, though he was rather red in the face, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Excuse me," he said. "Excuse me, boys. I didn't mean to be impolite, but I'm sorry you took so much stock in that pirate treasure yarn."

"Isn't there any?" asked Sammy, in disappointed tones.

"Well, there is and there isn't," said the old sailor. "That is to say there's a *story* all right enough, but as to there being any *treasure* I don't know. Nobody does, for sure, I guess."

"Will you tell us about it?" pleaded Sammy.

"Yes, go ahead," urged Frank. "That's the only way we'll have any peace—to get it out of Sammy's system as soon as we can."

"Huh! I guess you're as anxious as I am!" exclaimed Sammy. "Go ahead, please," he added, to the sailor.

"Well, I don't mind spinning the yarn for you," was the answer. "It won't take long. The story's been going the rounds of this beach ever since I can remember. To sum it all up, some of the old-timers claim that a good many years ago a pirate ship was wrecked here."

"Right here?" asked Sammy.

"Well, out where you see them rocks," spoke the sailor, pointing with the stem of his pipe. "There wasn't any lighthouse in them days, and you wouldn't know the rocks were there, especially at high tide, when they're covered.

"Anyhow there was a ship wrecked on 'em. That part's

true enough, for you can see what's left of her now, at low tide. But whether she was a pirate craft, or not, I won't undertake to say.

"But the story is that when the crew found they couldn't get the ship off the rocks, they took to the boats and came ashore, bringing their booty with 'em. What the booty was the story differs on. One yarn is that it was gold, another says silver, and a third diamonds. You can take your choice," and the old sailor chuckled, but this time he was careful not to swallow any smoke.

"I'll take diamonds," said Bob, with a snicker.

"Oh, please go on," urged Sammy, eagerly, and the sailor resumed.

"The story goes," he went on, "that the pirate crew, having lost their ship, buried the treasure, and went looking for another vessel. But they never got one. They had been trying to escape from a man-o'-war when they ran upon the rocks, and the government ship traced 'em here. The marines came ashore, soon after the pirates landed, and attacked 'em. That was the end of the pirates."

The old sailor paused, and lighted his pipe, which had gone out.

"Is—is that all?" asked Sammy, and his voice showed his disappointment.

"That's all," answered the sailor, solemnly.

"But what became of the pirate treasure?" asked Frank.

"Nobody knows. It may be buried here, or the marines may have got it. My own opinion is there never was any treasure. But lots of folks says there was."

"And if there was any, where would it be?" asked Bob.

"Oh, 'most anywhere around here," answered Mr. Salina, with a wave of his arm that took in the whole of the Cove. "You can start in and dig where you like," he chuckled.

"Nobody'll stop you. In fact there's been a good many folks, off and on, digging around here, for quite a few years back."

"Did any of 'em ever find anything?" exclaimed Sammy.

"Nary a one," laughed the old sailor. "It's all left for you boys to find."

"Well, maybe we can, after all," said Sammy, as he saw his chums looking at him and smiling. "I'm going to have a try, anyhow."

"It will take more than one Summer to dig all over this place," spoke Bob. "And it will spoil all our other fun. I want to have some swimming, boating and crabbing. You can have all the treasure you get, Sammy."

Sammy did not reply. He was looking toward the rocks, where, according to the story, the pirate vessel had been wrecked. Then he turned his gaze toward the shore, and looked up and down the beach. Was there a treasure buried in it? He hoped so. Yet he had been deceived so many times before!

"Come boys!" called Mrs. Bouncer, from the porch of the cottage. "I want you to go to the store for some things for supper. Then, too, I want to plan your sleeping rooms."

"We'll see you again," said Sammy, to the old sailor. "Maybe you can pick out the best spots for us to dig for the treasure."

"Not me!" exclaimed the old man, quickly and sharply. "I won't have anything to do with it. In the first place pirate gold is unlucky, and in the second place I've seen too many folks let their business go to rack and ruin spending their time looking for this treasure. I won't have anything to do with it."

Sammy looked a bit uncomfortable, and the old sailor, seeing this, hastened to add:

"But that needn't stop you from searching for the treasure—

if there is any. Dig as much as you like, only don't ask me to be responsible. You ask your father about hiring a boat off me," he added to Bob. "I makes my living—such as it is—that way—that and clamming and crabbing. It's a hard way to earn money, but it's more sure than looking for pirate gold," and he laughed.

The boys raced to the cottage, where Mrs. Bouncer waited for them. The three chums gave a hasty look about the place, and voted that it was the finest spot for a Summer vacation they had ever seen. It was but a few steps to the water, and they could put on their bathing suits in the house, and run down the beach for a dip.

Inside the cottage Mr. Bouncer and the two servants were unpacking trunks, and getting out garments and bedding. Mrs. Bouncer gave to Bob a list of the things she wanted from the store. The house was only a short distance to the village, and the three boys walked along the beach to a road that led to the town, where the stores were.

"Well, what do you think of it now?" asked Bob.

"Think of what?" inquired Frank.

"The treasure."

Frank winked, and glanced at Sammy.

"Oh, I know what you mean," put in Sammy, quickly. "You think it's all a joke. But I may show you fellows yet that it isn't."

"I wish you would!" exclaimed Bob. "I'd like a little loose gold myself."

There were busy times at Barnacle Cottage for the next few days. Getting settled took most of the time of Mr. and Mrs. Bouncer, and then Bob's father had to go back to Fairview to work. He would come down, however, for week-ends.

Bob and his mother, with the two boy chums, soon began to enjoy life at the shore. A large, safe rowboat had been hired

from the old sailor, and the boys were learning how to use it properly, under the instruction of Mr. Salina. Later on he promised to take them with him when he went fishing and clamming.

To get hard clams the old man would go in the shallow parts of Lighthouse Cove, and, with his bare feet, would tread in the mud until he felt a hard clam. Then he would work it on top of his foot, raise it out of the water and reach it in his hand, tossing it into his boat.

Soft clams he dug for on the exposed mud flats when the tide was low.

The boys themselves learned to catch crabs, dangling pieces of meat on the end of strings from the dock near the cottage. When a crab grasped the meat in his claws the boys would pull gently on the string, until the crab was near the surface of the water. Then they would slip a net under him and lift him into a basket, wiggling and clashing his claws.

The Fairview Boys made inquiries about the pirate treasure story told to them by the old man, and found that it was generally known. Few persons believed it, however, though, in times past, many had dug in different places for the supposed gold.

The boys had been at Lighthouse Cove for about a week now. They had boated, bathed and crabbed, and one night, after supper, Bob said:

"Fellows, it's about time we took in the lighthouse. I want to see how the lantern works."

"So do I!" exclaimed Frank. "I was asking Mr. Salina about it. He said an old shipmate of his kept the light, and he'd take us through any time we wanted to go."

"Let's go over now," suggested Sammy. "It will be more fun to see it lighted up."

Frank and Bob agreed with this, and as Mrs. Bouncer had

no objections, the three of them started down the beach toward the lighthouse, which was built on a little point of land, jutting out into the Cove.

It was just getting dusk, and the rays of the light shone out brightly. Sammy Brown, who was walking on a little ahead of his chums, suddenly came to a stop, in a lonely place.

"What's the matter—crab get you?" asked Bob, with a chuckle.

"No. Hush!" whispered Sammy.

"What's up now?" asked Frank. "See some of those pirates?"

Sammy turned and came back to his chums.

"Easy!" he cautioned. "Fellows, I think I have a clue! Come over here, but don't make any noise."

He led them to a clump of bushes beside the path. Cautiously parting the leaves, to make an opening, Sammy looked through. Then he drew back his head.

"Yes, he's there yet!" he whispered. "Take a look."

"Who is it?" asked Bob.

"Someone digging for pirate gold!" whispered Sammy, hoarsely.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE LIGHTHOUSE

FOR a moment Sammy's two chums looked curiously at him, and Frank seemed about to laugh. Then Bob said:

"You're crazy, Sammy!"

"I am not," answered the other, quickly. "Look there!"

All looked, and did indeed see a man using a spade to dig up the earth in a secluded spot not far from the path that led to the lighthouse. The man, who was elderly, had a lantern on the ground beside him, and as he sunk the spade into the earth, and brought it up, he would look closely at the soil in the rays of the light.

"Now what do you think?" demanded Sammy, in a triumphant whisper. "Isn't he digging all right?"

"Oh, he's digging," agreed Bob. "I admit that."

"And for gold!" added Sammy.

"Gold nothing!" exclaimed Frank with a quiet laugh. "Do you want to know what I think, Sammy Brown?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"I think that man—whoever he is—is after fish worms. See, he has a tin can there, ready to put the worms in. That's all he's doing, Sammy. He's after bait, getting ready for a fishing trip late to-night or early to-morrow morning."

"That's right," said Bob.

"Oh, is it?" asked Sammy, and he did not seem at all disturbed by what his chums said. Then he quietly asked them:

"Did you fellows ever hear of catching salt-water fish on

angle worms? I guess not—not around here, anyhow. Wasn't that what old Hamp Salina told us, when we asked him about bait the other day?"

"That's so," agreed Frank. "They don't use angle worms around here."

"No, but they use blood worms," declared Bob, "and you have to dig for them."

"Yes, down on the beach, but not up as far as this from the water," spoke Sammy earnestly, and the boys knew that he was right. Still the man with the lantern was digging for something, and he seemed very much in earnest about it, too.

The boys watched him for a minute or so in silence. They had spoken in whispers so far, and the digger had evidently not heard or seen them. He was too busy using his shovel.

Presently Frank spoke.

"Say, fellows!" he exclaimed, "maybe he isn't digging for anything after all."

"Pooh! Can't we see?" asked Sammy.

"No, I mean he may be *burying* something, instead of digging it up. He's making quite a hole."

That was something new to think about, and for a few seconds the boys watched to see if Frank's idea was right.

"Do you think he's one of the pirates?" asked Bob.

"Maybe—if there are any—but I don't believe so," answered Frank.

"Perhaps he found some of the pirate gold, and he's burying it again until he has a good chance to get rid of it. I wish we knew who he was."

At that moment the old man straightened up his bent back, and gave a sigh of relief, and also disappointment.

"Well," the boys heard him murmur, "I'll have to dig farther on. It isn't here, that's sure. I wonder if I will ever find it?"

The words seemed to strike a thrill through the Fairview boys. They looked at each other in the darkness, illuminated by the flashes of light from the lighthouse beacon, and then, as the old man picked up his lantern, and turned in their direction, they crouched down in the bushes in order to remain hidden.

But the night-digger, whoever he was, looked neither to left nor right. He turned sharply and walked away from the boys. Then they breathed more easily.

"I thought sure he'd see us," said Frank.

"So did I," added Bob.

"Let's take a look and see what he was after," suggested Sammy. "Maybe we can get another clue."

He was quite excited, and so were his two chums. Usually the others did not pay much attention to some of the queer things Sammy said and thought, but this time it seemed as though he had stumbled on a mystery. Still Frank was not going to give in too easily. He had not forgotten how Sammy's "counterfeiters" had turned out.

"I believe, after all," said Frank, "that this man will prove to be only someone looking for a place to bury a dead cat, or something like that."

"Oh, you get out!" exclaimed Sammy. "You're always making fun of my ideas. Didn't you hear him say that he couldn't find it? It means the pirate gold, I'm sure. Then he said he'd have to look farther. Does that look like he was burying a dead cat?"

"No, it doesn't," admitted Bob. "But let's go on to the lighthouse, and maybe the keeper there may know something about this old man. We'll ask him, and if he doesn't, perhaps Mr. Salina will."

"I say—hold on!" cried Sammy, as his two chums set off down the path again.

"What's the matter now?" asked Frank.

"Do you see the old man digging again?" inquired Bob.

"No," replied Sammy, "but don't let's tell the light-keeper nor Mr. Salina what we saw. Let's work this thing out ourselves. If there's any money in it we don't want to have to share it among too many people."

"Oh, you're always thinking of that!" laughed Bob.

"And another thing," said Frank. "Suppose that old man finds the pirate gold, Sammy, we couldn't ask him for a share in it, just because we spied on him, and saw him dig it, could we?"

"No," answered Sammy slowly, as he scratched his nose, which he always did when he was thinking deeply. "No, I s'pose not. But if we saw the old man digging, and he didn't find anything, there's nothing to prevent our going and digging near the same spots. He probably knows *about* where the gold is hid.

"But if we talk about this, and tell everybody, they'll all dig too, and they may find the treasure ahead of us."

"Say, you're as bad as when we went to Eagle Mountain," laughed Bob. "But go ahead. Have your way. We won't say anything until we've done a little more watching."

"That's all I ask," said Sammy.

"Then come on to the lighthouse," suggested Bob. "I'd like to see how the machinery works."

A little later they were knocking on the door of the small cottage built at the side of the big tower, in the top of which flashed the warning beacon.

"Come in," called a girl's voice, and the boys entered. They found themselves in a pleasant room, where sat John Floyd, the keeper of the light, and his wife and daughter. It was evidently the daughter, a girl of about twelve years,

who had invited the boys to enter, for she rose to welcome them, saying:

"I think I know you—Mr. Salina told me about you, and said you might come over to see us. Father, these are the boys from Barnacle Cottage. This is my mother and father," she went on, with a smile.

"I hope you don't mind us calling," spoke Bob. "Mr. Salina said visitors were allowed, and we wanted to see how the light worked."

"Glad to have you!" exclaimed Mr. Floyd, who was proud of his light. "And night is the best time to come to see the machinery working. Now let me get the straight of you—what are your names?"

The boys introduced themselves, and learned that the daughter's name was Lucy. She offered to take them through the tower, and led the way to the spiral stairs.

"Our light isn't a very big one," she said, "but it shows the ships where the dangerous rocks are, and I suppose that's all that is needed."

"Does it work by electricity?" asked Frank.

"No, it's an oil light," answered Lucy. "And father has to work all night to keep it trimmed and bright, and to see that the oil does not give out."

"It must be hard work," ventured Sammy.

"It is, but father is used to it now, and likes it. He sleeps most of the day, and stays up all night. Sometimes mother and I take the early watches of the night to give him a rest."

"Do you have bad storms here?" asked Bob.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sometimes. And then father always worries for fear the light may go out. If it did, even for a few minutes, some ship might take the wrong course and get on the rocks. Of course the big ships don't come up in our cove, but small ones do."

"Has that ever happened that the light went out?" Frank asked.

"Not since father has been in charge," said Lucy proudly, "and that is over fourteen years, now. He came here when he was first married, and has been here ever since."

"What is this for?" asked Bob, as they passed a curious bit of machinery in the tower, on their way up to the lamp itself.

"That is what turns the lenses," the girl explained. "You see this is a revolving light. It flashes around once every two seconds, and it is regulated by clock-work. This big weight that hangs down is used instead of a spring or an engine, to turn the lenses."

"I see!" exclaimed Sammy. "It's like a cuckoo clock."

"Yes," answered Lucy. "Father winds the weight up every day, by a crank and windlass, as in an old-fashioned well. Then it is caught by a sort of trigger. At night when the lantern is lighted, the weight is allowed to slide slowly down. That pulls the wheels around and the light flashes.

"You see each lighthouse in this section has a different sort of lantern. That is, some are fixed lights, some are revolving lights, some are red and some are white. Sailors can tell, by the difference in the lights, just where they are, even on the darkest night."

"A lighthouse is quite important," murmured Frank.

"We think so," laughed Lucy.

Then the girl took them up into the light chamber itself, a small room, with glass sides. The glass was really in the shape of lenses, as in an automobile lamp, only it was cut in another form, called a prism, in order to better cast out the direct rays, and magnify them.

The lantern was an oil one, and it burned brightly, for it was kept clean, and the wicks were often trimmed. The boys

Then the girl took them up in the light chamber itself.

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were rather surprised to find that it was the glass windows, or prisms, that revolved by means of the clockwork, and not the lantern itself. If the lantern went around it could not be trimmed without being stopped, and this would make a difference in the flashes, Lucy explained, and so confuse the sailors.

At certain places in the glass sides of the lantern room, there were blank spaces where no light could flash out, and this gave the proper signal for that part of the coast.

If you will take a pasteboard tube, such as calenders are mailed in, cut two or three holes near the top, making the holes the same distance apart, with blank spaces in between, and set this tube over a candle, you will have a good idea of a lighthouse. Then if you will turn the tube around, with the lighted candle still inside, you will get the effect of a flashing light, such as Bob and his chums were shown.

They were much interested, and stayed in the tower some time, watching Mr. Floyd trim and fill the lamp, to keep it bright.

"This is certainly great!" exclaimed Frank, when they were ready to leave."

"It sure is," agreed Sammy. Then he was unable to restrain his curiosity in spite of what he had agreed with his chums. "Say," he asked earnestly, when they were down in the living-room again, "did you ever hear anything of the pirate gold buried around here, Mr. Floyd?"

The light-keeper laughed.

"Oh, yes, I've heard," he said, "but I don't take any stock in it."

Sammy was not discouraged by this answer.

"Did you ever dig for it?" he persisted.

"Oh, yes, when I first came here, and heard the story, I was young and foolish, and I had my try at it," answered the

light-keeper, with a chuckle. "But I soon gave it up. I could make more money, and be sure of it, by tending the light."

"Does anybody ever dig for it now?" asked Frank, giving Sammy a meaning look.

"Oh, yes, now and then someone has a try at it," went on Mr. Floyd. "They think they can discover some new clues, I suppose. But I don't take any stock in 'em. Well, boys, come again—always glad to see you," he added, as they went out.

CHAPTER V

THE DARK BEACON

"WELL, what do you think now, Sammy?" asked Bob, as they walked toward Barnacle Cottage in the evening darkness.

"What about?" asked Sammy, sharply.

"About your treasure."

"I think just the same as I did before," answered Sammy, promptly, "and that is that it's around here. Didn't we see that man digging for it?"

"Say, you'd believe the moon was made of green cheese if someone told you," said Frank.

"Oh, I would; eh?" returned Sammy. "Well, you just wait and see."

The days that followed were happy ones for the Fairview boys. They went in swimming so often that Mrs. Bouncer said they might as well live in their bathing suits, and save their other clothes. They often went clamming, bringing home big baskets filled with the soft kind.

These clams were steamed, or made into toothsome chowder, which the boys enjoyed very much.

At other times the lads would take their own safe boat, and go to the distant sand flats, where they learned to tread for hard clams.

Crabbing was one of their chief delights, and many a basketfull of the clashing, clawing creatures they pulled out

of the waters of Lighthouse Cove. Sometimes they would get soft crabs, by hauling the seine, or straight net, along shore.

But, though they made many inquiries, or, rather, though Sammy did, he could not find out who the old man was whom they had seen digging by lantern-light. They had had a fairly good view of him, but in the Cove settlement were many old fishermen and sailors, who looked much the same as that elderly man did, so they were not sure which of the many villagers he might have been; and they did not like to ask.

One day, after the three chums had been rowing for some distance around the Cove, Sammy Brown suddenly exclaimed:

"I say, fellows, I've got an idea!"

"What, another one?" laughed Bob. "You're full of them lately."

"Let's hear it, anyhow," suggested Frank. "Can we have any fun by it, Sammy?"

"Sure. What do you say to rowing ashore, and digging a pirate cave."

"You mean dig a cave and look for the pirate gold?" asked Bob.

"No, I mean let's play we're pirates ourselves. We can go over to one of those sand dunes, and hollow out a hole in the side of it. We can make believe that's where we live, and we can make a fire of driftwood."

"Say, that'll be great!" cried Bob. "And we can bring some grub there and cook it! Sammy, you're all right!"

"Even if he can't find the pirate gold!" added Frank, gaily.

Filled with the new idea, the boys hastily rowed up on shore, and soon were digging into the side of the hill of sand, making a place where they could go in and imagine all sorts of delightful things.

The sand dune was one of many along the shore, and on top grew some rank grass that held the sand together. Working with broad pieces of driftwood for shovels, the boys soon had quite a hole in the sand pile. It was large enough to hold all three of them, and they were eagerly talking of the fun they would have.

"We can come over here and stay all night!" said Bob.

"Sure, it will be plenty warm enough, with a blanket or two," added Sammy.

"And we can cook our meals right on the beach, in front of the cave," added Frank. "That's the way the pirates used to do."

"Then we'd better get some driftwood for the fire," suggested Sammy. "We've got the hole almost large enough."

They collected quite a pile of the wood that was strewn along the beach, and then, after sitting in the "pirate cave" for a while, they rowed back to Barnacle Cottage, to get some food which they intended to cook over their campfire that evening.

After some objection, Mrs. Bouncer said the boys might cook a meal there, but she would not let them sleep all night in the sand cave.

"It's sure to be damp," she said, "and, though you boys might not think so, I can't have you catching colds. Play there in the daytime as much as you like, but you can't sleep there."

With this they had to be content. They had lots of fun building the fire, and toasting frankforters over the coals. Sometimes the sausages would drop off the pointed sticks, and fall into the ashes, but Bob and his chums brushed the dirt off and went on eating as if nothing had happened.

They played in the cave for several days, and some of the

other boys from nearby cottages joined with them, so the three chums became the leaders of a regular "pirate band."

One afternoon, however, something happened that put a stop to this fun. Sammy and his two chums had gone alone to the cave, and they had taken with them shovels to enlarge it, as it was getting too crowded on account of so many boys wanting to enter it.

"We'll make a dandy big cave, while we're at it!" boasted Sammy.

The three chums dug away for some time, and finally Bob said:

"That's enough, fellows. If we go too far back, and the sand should cave in, we'd never get out."

"That's right," chimed in Frank.

"Pooh! You fellows are scared!" exclaimed Sammy. "I'm going to dig it farther back. You two get some driftwood, and pile it out in front. We'll have a roaring big fire to-night."

Frank and Bob went up and down the beach, gathering sticks, and bits of broken boards, while Sammy continued to dig away inside the cave. Frank and Bob made several trips to and fro, and the pile of wood was growing.

Finally, as they neared the cave, on what they said would be their last trip, as they were tired, Frank cried:

"Look! The sand has caved in!"

"So it has!" exclaimed Bob.

They looked toward where the mouth of the cave had been. It was closed, and the sand was still sliding somewhat, showing that the accident must have happened only a little while before.

"And Sam—Sammy!" gasped Bob.

"He's in there!" faltered Frank.

"And we've got to get him out—quick!" cried Bob.

They both glanced up and down the beach. No one was in sight. Fortunately they had brought their shovels out of the cave.

With these they began digging at what had been the entrance to the "pirate" cavern. Shovelful after shovelful of sand they tossed aside, until their arms ached, but they would not stop.

"We must get him out!" gasped Bob.

"Before he smothers!" added Frank.

They worked with a will. Luckily for Sammy, he had been coming out of the cave when the accident happened. Otherwise he would have been so far back that he might never have been gotten out alive.

As it was Frank and Bob had dug for only a few seconds before they saw a hand moving about in the sand. Then another hand appeared beside it, and they stopped digging.

"There he is!" cried Bob, joyfully.

"And he's alive!" said Frank. "Use your fingers—not your shovel—we might hurt him."

With their hands they now scooped away the sand, and in a few seconds Sammy's face appeared. He was gasping for breath, and looked quite pale and frightened, but with the help of his chums he was soon completely uncovered.

"Are you all right?" asked Bob.

"I—I guess so," answered Sammy, shaking the sand from his clothes, and feeling all over himself to make sure. "Yes," he went on. "Nothing's busted."

"How did it happen?" asked Frank.

"I don't know. All of a sudden the sand began to slide. I got scared and ran for the front of the cave. Then the front door went shut, you might say, and I was caught. I held my breath, made a little place for my mouth and nose, and

waited. I knew you fellows would get me out, and you did."

"We were scared, though," confessed Bob.

"I guess we won't go in any more sand caves," said Frank. And they did not. It was a lucky escape for Sammy, and Mrs. Bouncer, when she heard about it, made strong objections to the boys playing pirates in that fashion.

But there were plenty of other chances for the chums of Barnacle Cottage to have good times, and they enjoyed their stay at Lighthouse Cove to the utmost.

Sammy still persisted in believing that pirate gold was buried somewhere about, and he dug in many places, when he could slip away from his chums, but without success. He kept a lookout for the man with the lantern, but could not meet him, as far as he could tell, though he saw many whom he thought was the person he sought. Nor did he make any inquiries for fear of being laughed at.

One evening, about a week after Sammy had been caught in the "pirate cave," he proposed, after supper, that he and his chums pay another visit to the lighthouse. He had taken some pictures of it with his camera, and wanted to show them to Lucy and her parents.

"All right, I'm with you," said Frank, and Bob nodded to show that he would go, too.

They saw the light flashing, as they started from the cottage, and struck across the now lonely beach. The rays of light came every so often, flashing over their heads, and out toward the inlet, where the sea and cove met.

Suddenly, as they walked along, Bob glanced up and exclaimed:

"See! The light has gone out!"

They all looked up.

"So it has!" faltered Frank.

"The lighthouse is dark!" said Sammy slowly. "Fellows,

it must be wreckers at work! They've overpowered the light-keeper, and put out the light to draw some ship in toward shore so she'll be wrecked! That's what it is—wreckers! Come on!"

CHAPTER VI

JUST IN TIME

FOR a moment Bob and Frank were so startled at not seeing the light flashing out, as it always did after sunset, that they did not stop to think what Sammy's excited words meant. They raced on after him, toward the entrance to the lighthouse, intent only on finding out what was the matter.

"It sure is wreckers," Sammy kept saying over and over again. "Some bad men are trying to get the ship on the rocks, and when she breaks up they'll get all the valuable cargo that comes ashore!"

Then Frank paid some attention to what his chum was saying.

"Hold on there!" he cried. "That's some more of your wild imagination, Sammy."

"Wreckers! Who ever heard of wreckers?" Bob wanted to know.

"I did!" exclaimed Sammy. "I'm sure they've put out the light!"

"How could they?" asked Bob. "Mr. Floyd has been there all the while."

"They—they overpowered him," said Sammy, hesitating a bit over the long word.

"Well, what about his wife and daughter?" Frank wanted to know. "I guess they wouldn't let any wreckers put out the light."

"Mrs. Floyd and Lucy are away this evening," said

Sammy. "I saw them go past our cottage. They said they were going to the moving picture show over in town, and would stay all night with some relations. It's all a plot—that's what it is! The wreckers knew Mr. Floyd would be alone."

Bob and Frank looked at Sammy a little differently now. It was true that the wife and daughter of the light-keeper had gone away. The two chums remembered this, now that Sammy had recalled it to their mind. The keeper was alone in the tower.

And certainly something must have happened, for the light was out, and as the boys raced toward it they glanced up, every now and then, hoping to see the bright beams flashing. But the tower remained in darkness.

As they ran on they saw a light flashing along the path ahead of them. It swayed from side to side, and flickered so the boys easily guessed that it was a lantern being carried by someone.

"There they are now!" cried Sammy, in much excitement.

"Who?" Bob wanted to know.

"Some of the wreckers! They're making signals! Don't let them see us!"

Frank and Bob hesitated. They did not know what to do, and, though they knew that Sammy was much given to imagination, and to excitement, this time he might be partly right, they thought.

"What shall we do?" asked Frank.

"Let's get away from here," proposed Bob.

"Come on—run!" advised Frank.

"It's too late—they've seen us and they're coming right this way!" exclaimed Bob. The person with the lantern, whoever he might be, was headed directly for the boys, and coming on swiftly.

"Fellows, we can't run," called Sammy. "Whatever happens we've either got to give the alarm about the light being out, or we've got to go to the tower, see what's the matter, and start it ourselves. We've got to stand our ground."

"Maybe someone from the town will notice that the light's out, and come over," suggested Frank, hopefully.

"They can't see the light from the back, over in town," put in Sammy. "You can only see it from in front, or at either side, the way we are now. The back part of the light is always dark."

"That's so," admitted Bob. "But what can we do? Who is this coming with the lantern?"

They did not have long to wait to find out, for the figure, with the swinging light, was running now. The path was narrow and the boys stepped to one side, slacking in their pace a little.

Then, as the stranger with the lantern came opposite them, Sammy and his chums gasped in astonishment.

The person who ran past them, paying no more attention to the boys than if he had not seen them, was an old man, and as he flashed by, Sammy cried:

"It's the same one—the man who was digging for the gold!"

"So it was!" exclaimed Frank.

"Let's take after him," suggested Bob. "Maybe he's seen the trouble at the lighthouse and is going for help. Then we won't have to go. Let's follow him!"

"No, don't!" cried Sammy Brown, catching hold of Bob's coat.

"Why not?"

"Because it's dangerous!"

"Dangerous? How?"

"That man's one of the wreckers!" whispered Sammy, hoarsely. "He's just been to the lighthouse to put out the lamp, and now he's going to join his gang. We'd better not interfere with him."

"Why, I thought you said he was looking for pirate gold!" exclaimed Bob.

"Well, I guess I was mistaken," admitted Sammy. The boys had come to a stop, and were looking after the man who was running away from them, his lantern bobbing from side to side. "I'm sure he's a wrecker anyhow," went on Sammy. "He looked like a desperate character!"

"Say, I don't believe you know what you're talking about!" burst out Frank. "Maybe that man has seen the trouble at the lighthouse, and has gone for help. But, for all that, I think we'd better go there ourselves, and see if we can do anything."

"Maybe you're right," admitted Sammy, as he looked in the direction of the bobbing lantern. "Anyhow I don't believe it would be a good thing to follow that man. Say, we're getting as badly mixed up in a mystery here, as we were on Pine Island."

"Yes, and maybe it will turn out just as easy," spoke Frank.

"No, I'm sure something is going to happen here," insisted Sammy. "The light being out, for one thing, shows that, and the old man digging for pirate gold is another. But come on, fellows. Some ship may go on the rocks while we're talking here."

"There's no storm, that's one good thing," murmured Bob. "I thought wreckers only worked during a storm."

"Maybe they do things different here," said Sammy. "Come on!"

They started again toward the lighthouse, now and then looking up toward the tall tower in the hope of seeing the

flashing beacon. But all was still darkness, save for the twinkling stars in the sky.

They reached the cottage connected with the lighthouse. The door was open, but all was dark inside. For a moment the boys hesitated. Afterwards Bob and Frank admitted that they were thinking of the same thing Sammy was—that perhaps there was a trap, and that the wreckers were waiting for them.

Finally Frank called:

"Hello, Mr. Floyd! Are you there? What's the matter? Why isn't the light going?"

At first only a groaning voice answered them, and then they heard the stronger tones of the light-keeper crying out:

"Oh, thank Providence someone has come! Quick, boys, you're just in time! Light the lamp! Never mind me! Light the lantern!"

"Are you hurt?" asked Bob.

"Did the wreckers attack you?" cried Sammy.

"Wreckers! Good land, no!" shouted the light-keeper. "I fell down stairs, and I guess my leg is broken. And when I fell I hit against the lever that puts out the lantern, and that made it all dark. And I've been lying here ever since, calling for help, but no one heard me. I didn't know what to do, for I can't seem to move.

"But you're just in time, boys. Come in, and I'll tell you how to light the lantern. Hurry, or some ship may go on the rocks! Wreckers? Good land, what made you think of them?"

"Fooled again!" murmured Sammy Brown, as he and his companions entered the cottage.

They started again toward the lighthouse.

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CHAPTER VII

ON THE TRAIL

"WHERE are you?" called Bob to the light-keeper, as the boys went into the living room. All was so dark they could see nothing.

"Right here, at the foot of the stairs," answered Mr. Floyd. "I haven't been able to move since my fall."

"Are you badly hurt?" asked Frank.

"I don't know, but I hope not. Never mind about me, though. You must set the lantern going, for I can't do it. That is most important. I have never yet let it go out—this is the first time; but I could not help that."

"Wait, I'll strike a match," said Sammy. "Then we can see what we are doing."

The tiny glow illuminated the room, and the boys could see the light-keeper huddled in a heap at the foot of the stairs that led to the tower, at the top of which was the big lantern.

"There's a lamp on the table," said the aged man, pointing to it. "Light that, and then go up to the lantern. Do you think you can light it?"

"I guess so," answered Bob. "Your daughter showed us how it was done."

"That's good. She little knew how soon you might have to do it. But if you think you can't do it, you must go for help. My wife and daughter have gone to visit relations, and will be away all night, but you can get some of the fishermen; they will know how to light the lantern."

"Oh, I'm sure we can do it!" exclaimed Frank. "Lucy showed us just how it was done."

"I'm thankful for that," went on the light-keeper. "Now, boys, don't bother with me!" he went on, as they advanced toward him. "Just get up aloft and set the lantern going. You see I have an arrangement so I can put it out from down here, without going all the way up. That's to save me climbing the stairs in the morning.

"Well, I was coming down, from having trimmed it, a little while ago, when I slipped. I put out my hand to save myself, and, by mistake I grabbed hold of the wire I had rigged up to put out the light. It put it out, all right, and here I've lain ever since, not knowing what to do. Oh, it was terrible!

"I couldn't tell when anyone would come, being all alone as I was. I called and called, but no one heard me."

The boys thought of the strange figure of the old man, with the lantern, running away, and they wondered if he had heard and had not heeded.

"I couldn't tell what moment some ship might go on the rocks," continued the light-keeper. "For the sailors, not seeing the light, might get off their course. I was glad there was no storm, for that would have made it much worse.

"But never mind about that now. You're here, thank Providence, and you can start the light going before it's too late."

"Come on!" cried Bob, and with a lantern which they had found and set aglow, to light them up the dark stairs of the tower, the three boys ascended. First, however, they had in spite of his protests, made Mr. Floyd more comfortable, by putting a pillow under his head, and straightening him out. They did not want to move him too much for fear one of his legs might be broken.

Up into the lantern tower the lads went. Then with hands

that trembled a little, they ignited the big wicks, first having raised the extinguishers that Mr. Floyd had accidentally pulled down over them in his fall.

The machinery, that made the glass prisms turn, was still in motion, not having been stopped since it was set going early in the evening, so with this the boys had nothing to do. As soon as they had lighted the lantern, the welcome flash went sparkling out over the waters of the cove, to warn captains off the dangerous rocks.

"And now we'd better get down and help Mr. Floyd," said Bob, when they had made sure that the lantern was going all right, and would not smoke. "I guess we'd better get a doctor."

"I think so, too," added Frank. "Too bad about your wreckers, Sammy," he went on, with a laugh.

"Aw, quit your fooling!" exclaimed the lad who sometimes let his imagination run away with him. "Something like that might have happened, anyhow."

"Yes, it *might,*" admitted Bob. "But it *didn't.*"

"I'm sure there's something queer about that man with the lantern we saw," continued Sammy. "He's after that pirate gold, I'm positive."

"Well, he does act queer," admitted Frank. "We can have a try for his secret, as soon as we get this lighthouse business fixed up."

"We do seem to run into the queerest things," remarked Bob. "If it isn't one thing it's another."

"I like it!" exclaimed Sammy, who was always on the lookout for something to happen. That it seldom did take place never discouraged him.

"Well, is everything all right?" asked Mr. Floyd, as the boys came down stairs.

"Yes," answered Frank. "The lantern is going all right."

"And now we'll look after you," went on Bob. "Are you badly hurt?"

"I can't tell. Best have the doctor look me over, I guess. I'm more comfortable since you boys came. It isn't so much for myself that I care, but the light depends on me. Uncle Sam trusts me to keep it going, no matter what happens, and I've got to do it. If I get knocked out someone else will have to look after it."

"We'll go for a doctor," said Sammy.

"Yes, and maybe we'd better go tell your wife and daughter what has happened," suggested Frank. "They'll want to be with you."

"I guess that would be a good plan," agreed the lightkeeper. "They ought to be here, for I'm afraid I won't be able to get up and down stairs much for a while."

While the boys were planning who should stay at the lighthouse, and who should go for the physician, hurried footsteps were heard outside, and a number of fishermen and sailors came crowding in. They were much surprised at what they saw.

"Look here!" exclaimed one big lobsterman, "what's all this here about, John Floyd?"

"We saw the light out," added another, "and we made up a committee to come and investigate."

"Thinking there was trouble," put in a third.

"Yes, thinking there was trouble," agreed the second speaker. "Has these boys been up to any tricks?" and he looked at the three chums suspiciously.

"Indeed they have not!" exclaimed Mr. Floyd, earnestly. "If it hadn't been for these boys the light would be out yet. And if you fellows had come a little quicker, instead of waiting to form a committee, it might have been better."

"Well, we didn't notice, until a few minutes ago, that the

light wasn't flashin'," said a clam dealer. "You know you can't see it very well from shore. But Ted Knowlton was out in his boat after eels, and he noticed right away that there wasn't any flash. So he rowed in as fast as he could and told us."

"But the boys got here first, and I'm mighty thankful to 'em!" exclaimed Mr. Floyd. "Howsomever, now that you men are here, you might lift me up on that lounge, and then get the doctor."

"And we'll go for your wife!" said Bob. "We can do that, if you'll tell us where she is."

The light-keeper gave them the directions for finding Mrs. Floyd and Lucy, who had gone to a relative about two miles away. The boys left, after waiting to learn that, in the opinion of the fishermen, Mr. Floyd's leg was only sprained, and not broken.

Stopping at Barnacle Cottage to tell Mrs. Bouncer what had happened, and where they were going, Bob and his chums hurried to where Mrs. Floyd was staying. She and Lucy were at first much alarmed at the news, but were soon told that nothing serious had happened. They at once returned to the lighthouse with the boys.

The keeper was feeling much better now, and the doctor had bandaged his leg. He would be unable to walk around for several days, it was said, and some of the fishermen agreed to come and help with the heavier work about the lighthouse until Mr. Floyd was able to be about.

"Well, that's over," remarked Bob, as he and his chums went back to Barnacle Cottage again. "Quite some little excitement for a while; eh?"

"That's right," agreed Frank.

"But it isn't over yet," said Sammy Brown.

"Why not?" asked Bob. "That is unless you're going to

have a look for the wreckers, Sammy," and he nudged Frank, to show that he was only joking.

"Humph! Wreckers, yes!" exclaimed Sammy. "If there *had* happened to be any you fellows would have been glad enough to want part of the credit. But as long as there wasn't, you can only poke fun at me."

"Oh, we didn't mean anything!" said Bob, quickly. "I was only joking, Sammy. Go ahead; tell us what you mean by it not being over yet."

"I mean we haven't found out who that queer old man is with the lantern," said Sammy. "I'm sure there's some mystery about him."

"Pirate gold; do you mean?" asked Frank.

"Well, I'm not going to say that again, and have you fellows laugh at me!" exclaimed the lad who did so much sensational thinking. "But that man is after something around here."

"I agree on that," said Frank.

"But what is it?" asked Bob.

"That's what we've got to find out!" declared Sammy, promptly. "Fellows, what's the matter with us trailing that queer man, until we find out all about him."

"Trail him?" questioned Bob.

"Yes," went on Sammy. "We'll try to find where he lives, and what he is after."

"And why he goes about nights with a lantern," added Frank. He and Bob were now as much interested as was Sammy, and they were eager to help their chum clear up the mystery.

Getting to the cottage, they found company had come to call on Mr. and Mrs. Bouncer, and before the boys went to bed they had to tell all about their adventure at the lighthouse.

"My, you boys certainly do things!" exclaimed one of the callers.

"Yes, too much, sometimes," said Mrs. Bouncer, with a sigh, as she looked at her son and his chums. "I never know what they'll be up to next. That's one reason I rather dreaded coming here. I didn't so much mind it at home, for though they were out on Rainbow Lake much of the time, there was a limit to that water. But here, so near the big ocean,—I don't know. I'm always afraid they'll be carried out to sea!" and she shivered slightly, as if from some unknown fear.

"Carried out to sea!" exclaimed Bob. How could we be? We never go as far as the inlet."

"And I hope you never will!" exclaimed his mother.

The boys told more in detail of their doings at the lighthouse and then were sent off to bed, for the hour was growing late. They only made a mention of the strange man with the lantern, whom they had passed in the darkness, and they did not tell of their intention to get on his trail, and try to find out who he was and what he was after. They thought that, had they spoken of him, permission to seek after his secret might not be given.

"Well, what's on the program this morning?" asked Bob, after breakfast one day.

"Me for a swim, as soon as it gets a little warmer," decided Frank, for the morning was a bit chilly.

"I'm with you!" agreed Bob.

"Can't you boys get a few crabs first?" asked Mrs. Bouncer. "I'd like some to make a salad. The tide is right now; isn't it?"

"Yes, it's coming in, and they always bite best on the incoming tide," replied Bob, who had learned that from an old fisherman. "What do you say, fellows; shall we go crabbing?"

"Sure," agreed his chums. "We can swim later."

Accordingly with crab nets, pieces of meat tied on strings for

bait, and a deep basket in which to keep the catch, the boys set off in their boat, for the other side of the cove, since there the larger crabs could be gotten.

They had good luck, and were busy pulling in some large ones, with big blue claws, when Bob suddenly called to his companions:

"Look, there he is now!"

They glanced up, to see, some distance back from the beach, in a clump of scrub evergreen trees, a man digging.

"There's our man of mystery!" exclaimed Sammy. "Let's trail him, fellows!"

CHAPTER VIII

DRIVEN BACK

SAMMY'S two chums did not answer for a minute. They looked at each other, and then Frank exclaimed:

"I've got a bite, and a big one, too. Pass that net down here!"

For a moment the prospect of catching another crab was greater even than the chance of finding out something about the strange man. Bob handed his companion the net, and Frank cautiously began pulling up on the cord to which was fastened the chunk of meat-bait. With his other hand he held the net ready to plunge into the water, and scoop up his prize.

"There he is!" cried Bob, whose bait was not then being taken. "Get him, Frank!"

"I will. Don't get excited and rock the boat. I'll have him in a minute!"

"There!" exclaimed Sammy, whose attention was also taken away from the man for the moment. "Net him!"

Frank plunged the net into the water, trying to get it under the crab, which was clinging to the meat with its claws. But the boy was not quite quick enough, or else he hit the crab with the iron ring of the net, for the creature suddenly let go, and with a quick motion of his broad, swimming flippers went scurrying off into the depths again.

"Oh, he got away!" cried Bob, in disappointed tones.

"You weren't quite quick enough," spoke Sammy.

"I was so! You jiggled my arm, and made the net hit him!" exclaimed Frank. "It was the biggest one I had, too; a yellow fellow, full of meat!" and he gazed reproachfully at Sammy.

"I did not jiggle your arm!" returned Sammy.

"You did so!"

"I did not!"

"Fellows, if we're going to trail that mysterious man, let's do it, and not scrap," suggested Bob. This was as near to a quarrel as any of the chums ever got. Frank's little burst of temper was soon over.

"Well, we've got enough crabs, anyhow," he said, looking into the basket where they were kept, covered with seaweed, so the sun would not make them die. For crabs are only good when cooked alive, or soon after they have died. Otherwise they are very likely to be poisonous.

"Yes, we have a good mess," agreed Sammy. "I didn't mean to jiggle your arm, if I did, Frank," he went on. "I'll give you one of my crabs to pay for it, if you say so."

"You will not! They all go in the same kettle, anyhow. Say, Bob," he went on, "what's the matter with having a clam roast out on the beach some night?"

"Sure we can," said Bob. "We'll build a fire, roast clams and boil crabs, and have some of the other fellows over. That'll be fun!"

"It sure will," agreed Sammy. "But say, fellows, what about him?" and he nodded in the direction of the old man in the clump of evergreen trees. He was still digging away, seemingly paying no attention to anything, or anyone, around him. "Are we going to follow him, or not?"

"We can't follow him, when he isn't going anywhere," observed Bob.

"No, but he may start off at any time," said Sammy. "We

could tell where he lives, and then we could find out something about him. As it is now we can't even tell who he is, and there are a lot of men who look like him around Lighthouse Cove."

"Well, what's your plan?" asked Frank, carefully pulling up his crab line, in the hope that the big fellow had again taken the meat. One was there, but it was so small that he shook it off, not wanting to net it.

"I say let's row close over to where he is," suggested Sammy. "Then, when he starts off, we can go ashore and follow him."

"Maybe he's got a boat hidden somewhere on shore," said Bob. "Let's take a look."

The boys scanned the beach, but could see nothing of another craft. Meanwhile, the old man in the clump of evergreens continued to dig away. He paid no attention to the boys.

"Tell you what it is," said Sammy, at length, "we've got to play foxy now. We don't want any more of that hermit business."

"What do you mean?" asked Frank.

"Well, you know what happened when we followed that old man on Pine Island. He pushed us over a cliff into a snow bank."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Bob.

"What's the matter?" demanded Sammy. "I don't see anything to laugh at."

"You don't?" Well, there's no snow bank, for one thing."

"Well, you now what I mean," said Sammy. "He might make trouble for us. I say we'd better be careful."

"That's what I say, too," agreed Frank. "Now the best way, I think, will be to let our boat drift. We can pretend

we are crabbing, but we can pull up the anchor, and the tide will take us nearly to where he is digging. He can't say anything, if we do that, for we have a right to drift."

"Yes, and then we can see if he has a boat," added Sammy. "I guess that's the best plan. But what about these crabs, Bob? Won't your mother want them for dinner?"

"No, she's going to make them into a salad for supper. We fellows will have to cook 'em, and pick 'em out of the shells, I expect. There will be time enough when we get in. Let's trail this old man now."

Accordingly the small pronged anchor, that held the boat from drifting while the crabbing was going on, was hauled up, and put in the bow. Then, while pretending to be busy with their crab lines, the boys let their craft drift with the tide over toward the shore.

The old man was still digging away, but he had moved his position and was now deeper in the clump of trees.

"I'm sure he's after pirate gold!" exclaimed Sammy, in a whisper, for he knew sounds carry very distinctly over water, and he did not want the digging man to hear him.

"He's after something, right enough," agreed Frank. "What it is we can find out later."

"There's a boat, anyhow," put in Bob, pointing to one partly hidden under some brush and seaweed not far from the shore.

"That's right!" cried Sammy. "That shows he came from some other part of the Cove. We'll follow him!"

But, for the present, the man did not show any sign of being about to leave the clump of trees. He was digging away, paying no attention to anything around him, save to glance up now and then. If he saw the boys, as he must have done, he gave no sign.

Bob and his two chums, now that they were where they

wanted to get, again threw the anchor overboard, and resumed their crabbing. But luck was not so good here, the boat being too near shore. However, they wanted an excuse for remaining near the man, and this gave them one.

"Here he comes!" suddenly exclaimed Sammy, as he wound up his crab line for future use. "Get ready now, boys."

The others looked up. Coming down toward the beach was the strange old man. Over his shoulder were a pick and a shovel, and in one hand he carried a square wooden box, with a strap for a handle.

"What do you s'pose he has that for?" asked Frank.

"To put the gold in," said Sammy, promptly, "or else that holds the map, and directions for finding the treasure."

"The directions can't be very good," spoke Bob, "for he's been digging in lots of places, far apart, too. I think that gold business is all bosh!"

"Hush! He'll hear you!" cautioned Frank, for the old man had looked sharply in the direction of the boys.

"I don't care," spoke Bob. "This is a free country."

The boys had again pulled up anchor, and taken to the oars. They were pulling out from shore now. The old man went to where the other boat was partly hidden, and slid it down over the sand to the water. Then, putting in his tools and the box, he entered the craft himself, and began to row up toward the head of the Cove.

"Come on!" said Sammy, to his chums. "We've got to follow."

"Do you think we'd better?" asked Frank.

"Sure; why not?" was the answer. "We've got to find out about him; haven't we?"

To this the others had no objection. They were as interested, now, as Sammy was in solving the mystery. So, when the old

man rowed off, more quickly than the boys supposed one of his age could do, they followed, but at a distance.

The day was a fine one, there was only a little wind, and the tide was with them.

"But it won't be so easy rowing back against the current," said Bob.

"Oh, don't worry," advised Sammy, eager to find where the strange man lived.

They did not have long to wait. A little later, after turning a point of land, the man rowed up to a small dock, in front of a small house, and, tieing his boat there, got out and went up the slope.

"Come on!" called Sammy, a moment later. "Let's go ashore."

"Maybe he won't like it," suggested Frank.

"Oh, he won't care," was the answer. "He's seen us following him, and he didn't say anything. Come on."

Rather against their will, Frank and Bob followed Sammy. He sent the boat up on the beach, and threw out the anchor in the sand to hold the craft against the tide. Then, followed by his chums, he approached the small cottage.

But if the boys imagined the aged man was going to witness their approach in silence they were disappointed. He reached his porch, and putting his pick, shovel and box down there, turned and hurried to meet Sammy and his chums.

"Did you boys want to see me?" he asked, and his voice was rather stern. He did not speak like the fishermen of the cove, but more, as Sammy said afterward, like Mr. Tetlow, the school principal, when he was angry.

"We—we just wanted to see," began Sammy, uncertain whether or not to tell his suspicions about the pirate gold, and to be allowed a share in the secret.

"Now look here, boys!" interrupted the aged man,

sternly. "I don't want to be harsh toward you, but you must get away from here. I said nothing when you followed me, not thinking you would land on my property. This is private land, and there has been a 'no trespass' sign up, but it has fallen down. I will put it up again. I want no strangers around here.

"My neighbors around me know this, and do not bother me. It is probably because you are strangers that you have come here. Now I will not have it. Later on I may be glad to see you, but now I must ask you to leave!"

He stood looking at the boys sternly. They had been ordered away, and there was nothing for them to do but to obey.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE BOAT

"WELL, we didn't find out anything."

"No, we had all our trouble for our pains."

"But we know where he lives—that's something we didn't know before."

This last was said by Sammy Brown. His two chums, Bob and Frank, had made the other remarks. The boys were rowing toward Barnacle Cottage, having been practically driven away from the place to which they had trailed the strange old man. His manner had been severe and stern, yet the boys knew he had right and justice on his side.

"We couldn't do anything but go," said Bob. "He could have had us arrested for trespass if we didn't."

"That's right," admitted Frank.

"Well, I didn't think he'd be quite so sharp," said Sammy, after a moment. "I thought he was a sort of simple old man, like some of the fishermen around here."

"But he's a lot different," spoke Frank. "Did you see how his eyes snapped, when he told us to get away?"

"I should say I did!" answered Bob. "He was real angry."

"But he spoke good enough to us," said Sammy. "I s'pose it was a crazy idea to go there in broad daylight, when he was at home. Next time I'll go at night, or when he's away."

"What! Are you going again?" cried Bob.

"I should say I am! I'm going to get at the bottom of this yet!" declared Sammy.

"Take him off!" cried Frank.

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"And when you do get to the bottom, it will fall out, just as it always does, and you'll have all your trouble for nothing," said Frank, with a laugh.

"Will I? Well, I'll see," answered Sammy, confidently. "I'm sure that man is trying to hide something."

"I thought he was trying to *find* something, from what you said at first—the pirates' gold!" laughed Bob.

"Oh, you know what I mean," returned Sammy. "Quit your fooling!"

They rowed on in silence for a few minutes, and suddenly Frank, who was in the stern, gave a loud yell.

"What's the matter?" asked Bob. "See a shark?"

"No, but a crab's got my toe! Look out! They're getting out of the basket!"

He jumped up on the stern seat, holding out one bare foot—to the big toe of which a large crab was clinging with his strong claw.

"Take him off!" cried Frank, dancing about.

"Take him off yourself!" exclaimed Sammy. "Think we want to get nipped?"

"Look out! You'll upset the boat!" cautioned Bob. "Keep still; can't you?"

"No, I can't, and I guess you couldn't, either, with a big blue-claw crab nipping you!" cried Frank. "Ouch! Get him off; can't you!"

He was trying to do this for himself, but the crab, that was one of the biggest caught, had one claw free, and every time Frank reached out his hand to grasp the creature, and pull it from his toe, the crab would open his other claw, and wave it around threateningly. So Frank was a bit cautious about taking hold of the creature.

"Look out! The others are getting out!" cried Sammy, as he glanced at the basket of crabs.

It was only too true. The boys had paid no attention to their catch for some time, and the crabs had pushed their way up from beneath the seaweed, and were crawling over the edge.

"Clap something on top of the basket!" cried Sammy. "Hand me that board, Frank."

"Can't! I've got troubles of my own! Ouch, let go, can't you!" he cried to the crab, which did not seem to want to do this.

"Wow! One's got me, too!" exclaimed Bob, turning quickly about.

"Smash him against the side of the boat!" advised Sammy to Frank, and, seeing this was good advice, the boy did so.

Crack went the hard crab against the gunwale, and the claw by which it had been clinging to Frank's toe came off. Crabs claws often come loose and new ones grow on again. So the creature was not much hurt.

"Whew! That's better!" gasped Frank, as he opened the nippers of the claw that still clung to his toe, in spite of the fact that it was severed from the body of the crab.

"Let go, can't you!" cried Bob, to the crab nipping him.

"Try Frank's trick," advised Sammy.

Bob did so, but the result was not exactly what was looked for.

The boy hit the crab, that had hold of his hand, such a blow against the side of the boat, that, losing his balance, Bob leaned too far over.

"Look out! You'll upset us!" cried Frank, who was nursing his nipped toe.

It was too late. The boat tilted, and, aided by the tide and the frantic efforts of the boys to prevent it, over went the craft, spilling out the three chums, crabs, and all. Then such confusion as there was!

Gasping and choking, from their sudden and unexpected bath, the boys came to the surface of the water. They were all good swimmers, and, fortunately had on only thin shirts and light trousers—almost bathing suits, in fact.

"Grab the oars!" called Sammy.

"And don't let the boat get away!" added Frank.

"There go the crabs!" shouted Bob, as he saw the basket containing their catch sail away on the tide, the crabs scrambling out, rejoicing in their unexpected liberty.

"Too late! We can't save 'em—have to catch some more!" called Bob. "Get the oars and the boat!"

"Going to right the boat?" asked Frank, as he swam to get a drifting oar.

"No, it's too much work here. Let's swim with her down to the lighthouse dock, pull her out there, and dump the water out. Then we can row home."

It was good advice; and the best and easiest thing to do. With the recovered oars, and their crab nets, the boys swam along toward shore, pushing the boat ahead of them. The water was not over their heads, and soon they could wade.

"Had an upset; didn't you?" called Mr. Floyd, the lightkeeper, who was at the dock as the boys came along.

"Sort of," admitted Sammy, ruefully.

"Lost all our crabs, too," added Frank.

"Yes, and mother won't like it," put in Bob. "She was counting on 'em for salad for supper."

"Never mind, as long as you're all right," advised the lightkeeper. "And as for crabs, I've been amusing myself catching a mess this morning. I've got more than I want, and I'll let you have some. Big ones they are, too. Where you been?"

They told him, and then, in a sudden burst of confidence, Sammy related about the strange old man, and told of how he had driven them away from his cottage.

Mr. Floyd chuckled, as he limped about on a cane, for he was able to be around now, though he could not go up and down the tower stairs.

"So you ran afoul of the professor; did you?" he asked with a laugh.

"Is that who he is—a professor?" asked Sammy eagerly. "What is he always digging for—pirate's gold?"

"Land love you, boy, I don't know; and no one else does, as far as I can learn," said Mr. Floyd. "He's been in these parts for some time now, but nobody knows what his game is. Digging; eh? Yes, he's always doing that."

"At night, too," said Sammy.

"Yes, night don't seem to make any difference to him," admitted the lighthouse-keeper. "He's a mighty queer man."

"What's his name?" asked Frank, binding a bit of his hndkerchief about his crab-bitten toe, while he and the other boys sat in the warm sun on the dock, letting their clothes dry.

"Watson—Professor Watson he calls himself," said Mr. Floyd. "No one seems to know much about him. He doesn't mix with us folks much—lives all alone in that cabin."

"Do you really think he might be looking for the pirate gold?" asked Sammy eagerly.

"Well, he might be," admitted Mr. Floyd. "Lots of wiser folks, and some more foolish than he seems to be, have dug for it—but never found it. He might have the craze, too. But I wouldn't advise you boys to bother him too much."

"Is he dangerous?" asked Bob.

"No, I wouldn't go so far as to say that," replied the light-keeper, slowly. "But you know you have no right to go on his land, and he might have you arrested."

"Did he ever have anyone taken in?" Frank wanted to know.

"No, but he sued Nate Hardon, his next door neighbor, be-

cause Nate's dog dug up the garden. And the funny thing of it was that the professor didn't have anything planted in that garden, as far as any of us could find out. He just got provoked because Nate's dog dug some holes, and he sued Nate. He won his case, too, and got six cents damage."

"Six cents! Is that all?" asked Sammy, in surprise.

"Oh, he didn't want the money," explained the light-keeper. "He just wanted the courts to say that Nate's dog had no right in the garden, and it hadn't, I s'pose. Anyhow, Nate had to build his fence over.

"But the professor, as we call him, is sure a queer character. I don't know what he's after, but whatever it is he hasn't found it. We folks leave him alone, and I guess you boys had better, too."

"Did you see him around here that night, when the light went out?" asked Sammy.

"No, I didn't," answered Mr. Floyd, and Sammy did not say why he had asked.

The boys' clothing was nearly dry now, and, the water having been emptied from the boat, which was pulled up on the beach, the lads started for Barnacle Cottage.

They took with them some of the crabs Mr. Floyd gave them, so their accident did not prevent Mr. Bouncer from having a fine supper that night. The boys built a fire out of doors, and boiled the crabs, afterward picking the meat out of the shells.

Talk as they did over the queer encounter with Professor Watson they could not come to any understanding of what object he might have in digging in various places. Sammy still stuck to his idea about the buried gold, but his chums did not agree with him.

Vacation days at Lighthouse Cove were slipping by. Already about half the Summer was gone, and the boys were

counting with regret on the time when they would have to go back to Fairview and to school.

They had more good times this Summer, so they said, than ever before. They went in swimming, rowed about in their boat, and caught so many fish and crabs that Mr. Bouncer said he could feel the salt water running out of his ears.

More visits were paid to the lighthouse, too, and the boys were always welcome there since they had done Mr. Floyd such a service. The light-keeper told them many fine stories.

At other times they went to the ocean beach, where the surf was heavier than in the cove near Barnacle Cottage. They were allowed to bathe in the shallow part of the ocean, near shore, but Mr. or Mrs. Bouncer kept sharp watch over them at such times.

The boys made many acquaintances among the fishermen and sailors who lived at the Cove, and were often taken out in the boats. Best of all they liked to go with Silas Warner, who had a large motor boat, one that was able to go through the inlet, and out to sea, when it was not too rough. Silas often went on long fishing trips, and when he only cruised about in the Cove Mrs. Bouncer allowed her son and his chums to go with him.

But she would never consent to their going out on the open ocean, though Silas often offered to take them. His boat, the *Skip,* had a cabin, and several persons could sleep aboard her.

"The ocean is too dangerous for the boys," said Mrs. Bouncer.

One day when Bob and his chums were down at Silas Warner's dock, watching him fix the engine in the *Skip,* he called to them:

"Want to come for a ride?"

"Sure. Where you going?" asked Bob.

"Oh, down by the bridge. I've got to get some supplies. I won't be very long."

The bridge was down near the inlet, where the ocean and cove met, surging their waters together over the sand bar. It was a fine, long trip.

"I guess we can go," said Bob, as he ran to ask his mother. She gave her permission, for the day was a fine, calm one, although hot, and she knew the boys would enjoy the trip on the water.

Soon, in the big motor boat, with Silas at the wheel, the boys started off in great delight. They waved good-bye to Mrs. Bouncer, who stood in the doorway of the cottage. Little did the boys think how much would happen before they saw her again.

CHAPTER X

CARRIED OUT TO SEA

"MAY I steer a bit?" asked Bob, when he and his chums had ridden in the big motor boat some distance down the cove toward the bridge, that was not far from the inlet.

"I guess so," answered Silas. "There aren't many craft about now, and I don't believe you'll run into anybody."

"I wish I'd asked him," murmured Sammy to Frank. "But I didn't think he'd let us."

All the boys were eager to take the wheel.

"We can take turns," said Bob, generously. Now that he had permission to do what he had long been anxious to, he was not going to be selfish. "Can't we take turns, Silas?" he asked.

"Oh, I guess so," was the good-natured answer. "It'll be as good a time as any to give you boys some points on steering. No telling when you may have a boat of your own."

"I wanted my father to get one this year," said Bob, "only he said I was too young to run it, and he didn't have time. When I go back I'll tell him I can steer a boat, and maybe he'll get one."

"I hope he does!" cried Sammy, with visions of what fine fun he and his chums would have in a power boat of their own.

"Well, there's a heap sight more to learn about a motor boat than just steering it," said Silas, with a grin, "though

maybe steering comes first. Now I'll show you what to do, and how to do it. Of course I can't show you all the different twists and turns of the channel now—it would take too long to learn them. But I can show you how to steer a boat, how to keep her straight, and how to go to port or starboard, or left and right, as they say now."

The three boys gathered about him as he sat at the wheel, which was made fast to a bulkhead, or partition just outside the cabin. The cabin of the *Skip* took up about half of the boat, the forward part. The after part was an open space, beneath the floor of which was the motor running in a sort of cockpit.

The motor was covered with a cover, or hatch, as it is called, and when this was in place you could not see the machinery, though it was running beneath your feet.

The cabin was of good size, and had small bunks in it that could be made up into beds. There were also lockers for food and water, and a small oil stove on which Silas cooked when he went off on fishing trips. In fact the *Skip* was a snug little craft.

"This wheel is what is called a sea wheel," went on Silas, beginning his steering lesson.

"Aren't all wheels sea wheels?" asked Bob.

"No, on some motor boats there are what are called land-lubber wheels."

"What's the difference?" asked Frank.

"It's easy to remember, once you've heard it," said Silas. "A land-lubber wheel turns in the same direction you want the boat to steer. For instance, if you want to go to the left you twist the wheel toward your left hand, and if you want to go to the right you twist it to the right.

"But a sea wheel is just the opposite from this. With that, if you want your boat to go to the left, you turn the wheel to the

right, and if you want to go to the right you twist the wheel to the left."

"I should think you'd get all twisted up!" exclaimed Sammy.

"Well, you might, at first, but once you've learned to use a sea wheel you won't want any other," went on Silas. "I'm not saying but what it might not have been better at the start, for every boat to have a wheel you could turn in the direction you wanted to go, but as long as they have sea wheels you might as well learn that way. Now we'll begin."

In turn he let the boys handle the wheel, sending the boat this way and that, until they found how quickly the *Skip* responded to her rudder.

At first each of the lads got a little confused, and turned the wheel the wrong way. But soon they remembered, and when Silas, pretending he was the captain, ordered them to go to the right or left they did do it without any trouble.

They passed several other boats from time to time, and Silas showed how to get by them without getting too far out of the channel, or without passing too close to the other craft. There was a compressed air whistle on the *Skip* and the boys took great delight in blowing this.

"It's a heap more fun on a trip like this than trailing that queer old Professor Watson!" exclaimed Bob.

"That's right," said Frank. "I don't believe we'll bother with him any more."

"No, I guess I was wrong about that pirate gold," admitted Sammy, and his chums laughed, for this was the first time he had ever given up. But he was so interested in the motor boat that he thought of little else.

The trip to the bridge, just above the inlet, was rather a long one, but the boys enjoyed every bit of it, and they were sorry when the *Skip* pulled up to a dock, and Silas announced that

he would stay there for some time, buying supplies for himself, and for a number of other fishermen, who had asked him to obtain things for them. There was a general store at the bridge—a store which supplied many sailors and fishermen with the things they needed for their work.

While waiting for Silas, the boys went ashore and wandered about the little settlement about the store. Finally the fisherman came out and said:

"Boys, I find I've got to go down near the inlet after some stuff. Now you said your folks didn't want you to go there, and I don't want to take you when Mrs. Bouncer said you weren't to go. So you'd better stay here until I come back. I won't be long."

"Oh, that's no fun!" exclaimed Bob.

"I wonder if we couldn't go," suggested Frank.

"There isn't any danger; is there?" asked Sammy.

"I don't think so," answered Silas, "but them women folks has their own opinions. I never go agin 'em."

The three chums were much disappointed, when Bob saw a telephone on the wall.

"That's the thing!" he cried. "I'm going to telephone my mother at the cottage, and ask her if we can't go. I'll tell her there's no danger."

"And you can tell her I said so," put in Silas, for he liked the Fairview boys, and wanted to give them the pleasures of the trip.

Bob was soon talking to his mother over the wire, and, after some hesitation, she said the boys might make the longer trip. And, on the suggestion of Silas, Bob said they would probably not be home for dinner, since it would be late.

"We'll just get a lunch on my boat," said Silas. "I've got plenty to eat, and a stove to cook it on."

"Oh, that will be fine!" cried Sammy, and the others agreed with him.

So it was arranged, and a little later the *Skip* went under the bridge, and pointed her bow toward the broader and deeper waters that led to the inlet.

It was about three miles to where the waters of the ocean and Cove met, and the channel was so twisting, on account of the shifting sands, that Silas did not like to let the boys steer. So he held the wheel himself.

From time to time, as the boat went on Silas would raise the hatch cover, and look at the throbbing motor, to see that it was running all right. Once in a while he would oil it. The boys looked on with interest when he did this, and asked many questions.

Silas explained how he had to spin the flywheel around to start the motor, and how he turned on the spark and gasolene. Sometimes, he said, the motor would start when the electric switch was closed, without the flywheel being turned by hand.

Now and then, as the *Skip* went along, Silas would look up at the sky, and shake his head as though in doubt.

"What's the matter?" asked Sammy, after a bit.

"I don't like the looks of the weather," was the answer. "It looks to me as though we were in for a heavy thunderstorm."

"They're not dangerous; are they?" asked Bob.

"Oh, well, not specially so. But down here, near the inlet, the wind sometimes blows pretty strong, and when the tide's running out, as it is now, there's a powerful current. I almost wish I hadn't brought you boys along."

"Oh, we're not afraid," said Frank with confidence. "The *Skip* is a good boat; isn't she?"

"There's none better afloat, for her size," said Silas proudly. "I've ridden out many a gale in her down in the

The boys sat about eating the sandwiches.

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big bay. But of course the ocean is different. However, I'll just hurry through and maybe we can get back before she blows too hard. I think we'll have a bite to eat now, for we may not get time later. Here, one of you boys take the wheel. There's a straight course now, and I'll get out the things and make some coffee."

This was soon done, and the boys sat about, eating the sandwiches Silas made. They were having the time of their lives, and the fact that in the West a big bank of black clouds was gathering, from which now and then lightning flashed, did not worry them. They were sure they would get back all right.

Silas had to stop at a small dock, not far from the inlet, where an old sailmaker had his shanty. The fisherman was to call for a sail for one of his neighbors.

Silas made fast the *Skip* in a hurry, and, leaping out on the dock, called to the boys:

"Wait here until I come back. I won't be long. Then we'll head for Lighthouse Cove."

"All right," answered Bob. "We'll be all right."

The darkness had increased because of the clouds, and now a strong wind sprang up. It whipped the waters of the channel into whitecaps, and this, with the strong tide that was running, made the *Skip* strain hard at her mooring rope.

The wind blew harder, and then with a sudden outbreak of fury the storm broke, the rain coming down in such torrents that the boys could not see the shanty of the sailmaker.

"Get in the cabin!" cried Sammy.

"That's right!" yelled Frank. "We'll be soaked here!"

They tumbled into the cabin, which was below the level of the cockpit deck, and pulled the sliding doors shut.

"Now we're all snug—let her rain!" cried Bob.

And rain it did. The pelting drops made so much noise

on the cabin roof that the boys had to shout to make each other hear. The thunder was terrific, and the bright lightning cut through the blackness that was almost as dark as night.

"Say, this boat is bobbing some!" suddenly exclaimed Frank.

Indeed the *Skip* was in violent motion, and the boys did not know what to make of it. She swung about, and then brought up suddenly as the rope tightened.

Then, all at once, there was a violent jerk, and the boat swung about more than ever.

"I hope that rope holds!" cried Sammy.

"So do I!" exclaimed Bob. "What if it should break?"

Then the *Skip* seemed to swing entirely around, and a moment later she raced off through the storm, tossing violently up and down on the waves. The boys heard confused shouts above the noise of the storm.

"What is it?" cried Sammy.

"Something has happened!" yelled Frank.

"I'm going to have a look," said Bob resolutely, as he slid back one of the cabin doors. The burst of wind and rain in his face almost drove him within again, but he went out into the little open space.

Then his worst fears were realized. The *Skip* had broken away from her dock, and was racing before the wind and tide down the channel toward the inlet.

Bob could just make out, on the end of the dock, the figure of an excited man, waving his hands to him. But what he said could not be heard. Bob was sure the man was Silas.

"What is it—what's happened?" called Frank.

"We've broken loose!" shouted Bob, coming back into the cabin. Even in those few seconds he had been drenched with the rain.

"Broken loose from where?" asked Sammy.

"From the dock. We're adrift!"

"Adrift! Where are we going?" gasped Sammy and Frank together.

"We're being carried out to sea, I guess," answered Bob, and there was fear in his voice, much as he tried to hide it.

Meanwhile the *Skip,* at the mercy of the wind and tide, was being carried faster and faster out toward the inlet that led to the great ocean.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE STORM

DESPAIRINGLY the boys, shut up in the cabin of the *Skip,* looked at one another. They had to cling to the bunks and the sides of the bulkheads in order not to be thrown down, so violent was the motion of the craft. Sometimes the boat would whirl completely around, and after this had happened several times Bob cried:

"Fellows, there's only one thing to do!"

"What's that?" asked Sammy. "Can we do anything?"

"We've just got to," said Frank. "If we don't we'll sink pretty soon, and be drowned. I think I know what you mean, Bob. You mean we've got to steer the boat?"

"That's it! She's going every which way now, and there's no telling what may happen. If we can get at the wheel we may be able to send her ashore."

"But the wheel is outside!" cried Sammy. "We can't go out in this storm to steer."

"Oh, yes we can, if we had to," said Bob. "But we don't have to. There's another wheel inside the cabin, you know."

And so there was, Silas having arranged this for his own comfort in stormy weather. The *Skip* could be guided either by the wheel outside in what might be called the cockpit, or from within the cabin. And in the cabin, up forward, were small windows, or bull's-eyes, through which the steersman could look.

"If we could only start the motor we could turn around and go back," suggested Frank, while they were trying to make their way up front, to the wheel, without banging against the sides of the cabin.

"Oh, we'd better not try to monkey with that—especially in this storm," said Bob. "If we can only keep the boat straight ahead, so it won't whirl around so, and make us dizzy, it will be a good thing. After the storm we can try the motor."

"But by that time we will be out to sea!" cried Sammy.

"We can't help it," came from Bob. "Here goes now, to see what sort of a course I can steer."

The wheel was twisting and turning this way and that as the waves moved the rudder. Bob turned the spokes until he had the one with ring marks on it exactly upright in front of him. When this had been done, Silas had told them, the rudder was straight, and the boat would go straight ahead.

And, as Bob looked from the bull's-eye, he saw nothing ahead but a straight course of water. The waves had been whipped into whitecaps of foam, but there seemed no obstruction, and with the wind blowing them, and the tide carrying them, all the Fairview boys could do was to keep on.

"It sure is some storm!" murmured Frank, as a louder clash of thunder than any before seemed to shake the very boat.

"And we're in it!" murmured Sammy. "What will our folks think?"

"Oh, Silas will tell them," said Bob, as he braced his feet apart to meet the heaving motion of the boat.

"Yes, he's left behind there on the dock," said Frank. "Our rope must have broke when the wind and waves banged us about that time. He'll tell the folks all right."

"But that won't stop mother from worrying," said Bob, anxiously, for he disliked to cause her or his father anxiety.

"They'll come after us," remarked Sammy. "Silas will get another boat and come for us."

"If he can find us," spoke Bob. "But if we go out to sea I don't believe he can easily pick us up."

"Oh, he will, sooner or later," went on Frank, who did not seem to feel so badly about it as Bob did. "Don't get scared."

"Oh, I'm not exactly scared," replied Bob, stoutly, "for this is a good boat. But a storm at sea is no fun!"

"Maybe it isn't storming out there," suggested Sammy.

"It's sure to be," declared Bob. "But we've got to make the best of it. We've got plenty to eat, that's one good thing."

"And a good place to stay," added Frank. "We're better off than when the *Puff* was wrecked."

"But we may be wrecked yet," put in Bob.

"Oh, cheer up!" advised Sammy. "We'll be laughing at this in a few hours."

"But how dark it is!" said Bob. "It's almost like night!"

"We've got lanterns here," suggested Frank. "Why not light them? And it might be good to show a light outside, so no other boat will run into us."

"Let's do it!" cried Bob. "I'll steer and you fellows can light up. There are some oilskin suits in one of the lockers, Silas said. You can put one on when you go outside."

The lighting of the lanterns made the boys feel less gloomy, and when Frank and Sammy, putting on the yellow oilskin coats, went outside and hung lanterns there, the boat was in less danger of collision.

"Say, we must be almost to the ocean," cried Frank, as he and Sammy came into the cabin again.

"What makes you think so?" asked Bob.

"Because I can hear the booming of the surf. We'll be out on it in a little while."

"Well, we can't help it," said Bob. "I thought we were there long ago, the way we bobbed up and down."

"Yes, it is rough," said Sammy. "We must be almost in the inlet, fellows. Silas said it was always dangerous to go through there."

"But not so bad on the out-going tide," spoke Bob, quickly, and he was glad he had remembered that point. "I guess we'll make it all right," he added, hopefully.

The storm did not grow less. The lightning still flashed and the thunder rolled, while the rain came down in torrents. The cockpit was fitted with scuppers, or openings that allowed the water to run off, or otherwise the *Skip* would have been flooded. As it was, some water came into the cabin under the doors. But the boys did not mind this.

Had the motor been running they would have reached the inlet, and gone through it into the open sea, some time before. But as it was they were only blowing and drifting along.

"Well, there's no use staying this way," said Frank, after a bit, as he felt of his wet clothes. "I'm going to take off some of them and get dry. We can light the oil stove."

"And get something to eat," added Sammy.

Somehow or other this idea seemed to make all the boys feel better. The stove was soon glowing and the cabin was cozy and warm. Indeed, but for the fact that they were storm-driven out to sea, and were so alarmed, the boys would have enjoyed the adventure.

They took off some of their wet garments, and hung them near the oil stove to get dry. There were blankets in the bunks, and in these they wrapped themselves up. Frank put some coffee on the stove to warm, though the boys, as a rule did not take this beverage. Still they thought it might prevent their taking cold.

Little could now be seen outside, for to the darkness of the

storm was added the gloom of coming night. The boys were anxious as to what Mrs. Bouncer might think, and they did not know what would be the outcome of this drifting into the ocean. But they could do nothing except what they were doing.

They could only hope for rescue.

The boys were taking their coffee, and eating some of the sandwiches Silas had made, when suddenly the boat was tossed about more violently than ever before. She rose up, with her now high in the air, and things in the cabin slid toward the stern. Then the bow went down and the stern rose up.

"What's happening?" cried Frank.

"Listen!" exclaimed Bob.

"That's the surf!" called Sammy. "We're going through the inlet into the ocean!"

There was a terrific crash of thunder, and a brilliant flash of lightning. Looking through the bull's-eyes Bob could see the heaving billows. Then, as the *Skip* ceased her violent motions, and began to move regularly up and down, Bob cried:

"We're out to sea, boys! Think of it! Out on the ocean!"

CHAPTER XII

DRIFTING

SOMEHOW, in spite of the fact that they tried to be brave, and to meet the danger with as stout hearts as possible, the Fairview boys could not repress a feeling of fear as the meaning of Bob's words came to them. And the speaker himself shuddered a little as he looked out on the heaving waters of the ocean, as the lightning made them plain to him.

"Well, there's one good thing," said Frank, taking a long breath, "we're not so likely to run into anything out here as we were in the cove or inlet."

"No, that's so," agreed Bob. "But the ocean is an awfully big place to be out on—in a small boat."

"This isn't such a small boat," said Sammy, quickly. "It's better to be in this than in our rowboat."

"Indeed it is!" said Frank. "Maybe we'll be all right by morning."

"That's so—we will have to stay out here all night, I guess," said Bob, ruefully. "There'll be no chance of being picked up until daylight, I reckon."

"If we're picked up then we'll be lucky," added Sammy. "This is different from Rainbow Lake and Pine Island. It's so much larger."

"But some ship might see our lights, and come for us," suggested Frank.

Bob shook his head.

"I was talking to Silas about that the other day," he said.

"No ships come as close in shore as this. Some trawlers, that catch moss-bunker fish for fertilizer, do, in the daytime, to let down their nets, but not at night."

"Then what chance have we of being rescued?" asked Sammy.

"Oh, I guess we've as good a chance as any fellows would have who had this happen to them," went on Bob. "In the morning the chances are some ship will see us. We can make some sort of flag, for a distress signal, I think. If we knew how we might fix our lanterns now, to show that we needed help. But I don't know how to do it."

Neither did the other boys, so it was decided to wait until morning. Besides, none of them cared to go outside in the rain and darkness, now that they were on the open ocean. It gave them a sort of "scary" feeling. They did not say so, but they were a bit afraid, as they admitted afterward, of falling overboard.

The wind and rain still kept up, but the thunder and lightning were not so bad, and for this they were glad. Then, too, they were not tossed about so violently as they had been while in the waters of the Cove and the inlet.

There the shallow waters were more quickly disturbed by the wind, while the deeper sea took longer to raise large waves.

But, for all that, the *Skip* swayed and rocked in the grip of the storm, for she was but a small boat to be on such broad waters. In the hands of Silas Warner she might have ridden more easily, for her owner would have known how to steer her.

Then, too, he would have started the motor, and he could have kept her head to the wind and waves, and this is always wise in a storm.

But the boys could only let her drift, and this meant that at times the craft would dip down into the trough of the sea,

sinking with a motion that made the lads feel as though their stomachs were going to drop out.

Fortunately they were not seasick, for they were too used to the water at home, and had been in some rough weather before. So they were accustomed to the irregular motion. But it was not the more pleasant on this account.

Again the *Skip* would be blown around with her head to the wind and waves, and at such times she would rise on the crest of a big roller until, it seemed to the boys, as if she were going to shoot toward the sky.

Then the boat would slip down on the other side of the big hill of water like a sled coasting down a snowy incline and the boys would look at each other as though they feared they were going to the bottom of the sea.

But always the stanch little *Skip* would come up again.

"She sure is a dandy boat!" exclaimed Bob, and the others agreed with him.

It was now about eight o'clock and quite dark. The storm still rumbled and rolled about the boys, but they were getting used to it now.

"It's dying out," said Frank, as he put on some of his clothes that had dried by the oil stove.

"Yes, by morning it will be calm again," said Sammy.

"If we could only get home by morning," spoke Bob, a bit sadly, and, in spite of his resolution to be brave, he could not keep a few tears from his eyes as he thought of his mother, who, he knew, would be frantic about him.

"Don't worry," said Frank, soothingly, for he guessed of what Bob was thinking. "Silas will go there and tell your folks all about it, Bob. Then he'll organize a searching party, and come after us in a big boat."

"Yes, if he can find us," said Bob, gloomily.

"Oh, sure he can find us!" exclaimed Sammy.

There was silence for a while, with the *Skip* drifting on in the storm and darkness. Occasionally a bigger wave than usual would break over the high bow, and come crashing down on the roof of the cabin. At times the weight of water was so heavy that the boys feared the roof would be crushed in, but the *Skip* was made to stand hard knocks, and well she did it.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Sammy, after a bit. The boys had put on their clothing, which was warm and dry, and they were sitting about the cabin, looking at one another, and wondering what would happen next.

"What can we do?" asked Bob. "We can only drift, until morning."

"Then I say let's go to bed," proposed Frank. "We can't do any good by sitting up, and maybe we can get some rest."

"But supposing some vessel runs us down in the night?" suggested Bob.

"That isn't likely to happen with our lights burning. Besides, staying awake won't stop that."

The boys were tired enough to turn in and stretch out on the bunks, though possibly they were too alarmed and excited to sleep. As Frank had said, their outside lights, the red and green and white, were glowing, and any vessel, seeing them, would not run them down.

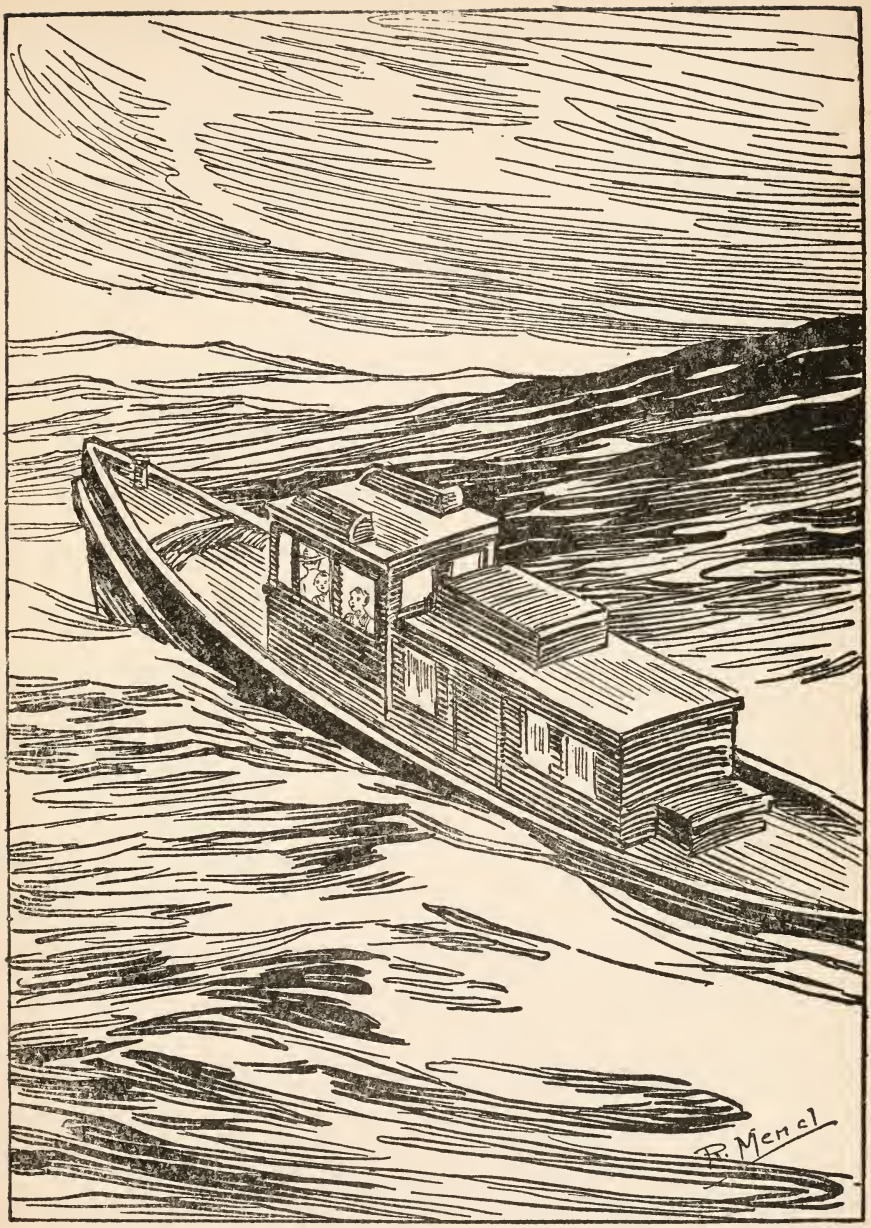
"I say let's try something before we go to bed," said Bob.

"Try what?" asked Frank.

"Try to make someone hear us. Let's go outside and blow the air whistle and yell. Maybe some passing ship may hear us and take us on board."

"That's a good idea!" exclaimed Sammy. "We'd better go out anyhow, and look to see if the lanterns are all right. We wouldn't want them to go out in the night."

It was still raining, but not so hard, and, putting on the suits



They appeared to be alone on the ocean.

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of oilskins, the three chums made their way out to the open deck of the *Skip,* behind the cabin bulkhead.

Here they felt the full force of the wind, and the rain stung into their faces. Also they felt the salty spray of the ocean as it blew over the bow. All about them they could see the white-topped billows, and they looked larger than they had from the cabin. Still the *Skip* seemed to ride them well.

A glance showed the boys that the lights were all right. They were full of oil—Silas had told them he always kept them ready for instant use.

"Now for a yell!" called Sammy, and the boys called together.

Several times they did this, at the same time blowing the compressed air whistle. But there came no answer, nor could they see the lights of any passing ship. They appeared to be alone on the ocean in the storm and darkness.

"It's no use," said Bob, sadly.

"No, let's go inside," suggested Frank.

"Besides, we want to save some of the air in the tank to blow the whistle to-morrow," went on Sammy. "We can compress the air only when the motor is running, and we can't start that."

"Maybe we can," suggested Bob. "I'm going to have a try at that in the morning, if we aren't picked up before."

"Maybe it will start by just turning the switch. Silas said it did, sometimes," spoke Frank.

"Well, don't try it now," exclaimed Bob, quickly. "We don't want to get it going when we don't know which way to steer. Let's wait."

And wait they did.

Into the cabin they went again, out of the wind and rain. The shelter seemed a cozy place in contrast to the blackness outside.

"Didn't it all happen suddenly?" remarked Bob. "One minute we were at the dock, waiting for Silas to come back, and then, all at once, the storm came up, we broke loose, and had started to drift. It all seems like a dream."

"I wish it was a dream," murmured Frank, "and that we'd wake up in Barnacle Cottage."

"I wonder if anyone could have cut or loosened our rope," spoke Sammy, as though he were thinking of something.

"What makes you say that?" asked Frank quickly. "The rope broke—that's what happened."

"I don't know about that," went on Sammy, mysteriously. "If a person had been on that dock, and saw the boat tied there, it would be very easy to slip the rope off the post."

"Yes, that's true enough," admitted Frank. "But who would do such a mean thing as that; especially when a storm was coming up, and we would be in danger? Who would do such a thing?"

"Well, the queer old professor who drove us away," answered Sammy.

"There! I knew he was going to say that!" cried Bob.

"Oh, well, of course I'm not saying for sure," spoke Sammy, quickly. "But it might have happened. If that old man had been around he might have thought that was a good chance to get rid of us, so we wouldn't bother him again."

"Well, that's all foolishness!" exclaimed Bob. "And, even if he did it, I'm not going to bother him again, anyhow."

"I am!" declared Sammy. "I'm going to find out what he knows about pirate gold!"

Frank and Bob laughed at him, but Sammy was very much in earnest.

On and on drifted the *Skip,* driven by wind and tide. The night wore on, and the boys, unable to stay up any longer, went to the bunks to rest, lashing the steering wheel to keep

the rudder straight. They did not know where they were going. They only knew they were drifting.

The rain did not come down so hard now, and the wind had slackened. Only once in a while did it lighten and thunder.

It must have been near morning, for a faint, hazy light was coming in through the bull's-eyes windows, when Sammy was suddenly awakened in his bunk by feeling a shock. He jumped out into the middle of the cabin, crying:

"Fellows, we struck something! Maybe we've gone ashore!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE ABANDONED BOAT

Bob and Frank were so surprised by Sammy's sudden call that they could only stare stupidly at him, and try to rub some of the sleepy feeling from their eyes. Then, as the bumping and grinding sound still kept up, Sammy cried again:

"Fellows, we sure have struck something. Maybe we're at a dock! Oh, I hope so! I guess our voyage has ended!"

"Good!" cried Bob.

Frank went to the forward bull's-eyes and looked out. It was getting daylight.

"You've got another guess coming, Sammy," he said. "We're still out on the ocean, it looks to me. We couldn't be at a dock and be moving this way."

The motor boat in which they had so strangely been blown to sea was still heaving up and down, though by the silence outside the boys realized that the storm was over.

"Well, we're certainly up against something," insisted Sammy. "Listen to it bump!"

There was no doubt about this. The motor boat was grinding and bumping up against some object it had collided with on the oeean. And still the boys, from the cabin windows, could see nothing.

"Maybe," began Sammy, as his eyes grew big with wonder, "maybe it's a whale!"

"A whale!" cried Bob. "Listen to him, would you! That's as bad as the pirate gold."

"It sure is," agreed Frank, as he began to dress.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Sammy. "It might happen just the same, and if we find a dead whale outside you fellows won't be so ready to laugh!"

"Oh, a dead whale—maybe yes," agreed Bob, for more than once Sammy had been right in his queer guesses, though a number of his wild dreams of sensational things had not proved to be true.

"Yes, or a live whale either," went on Sammy, who was following Frank's example in getting into his clothes, as was Bob. "Didn't you ever read of whales scraping themselves against ships to get the barnacles off 'em."

"Off the ships?" asked Frank, with a smile.

"No, off the whales themselves. Anyway, I think it's barnacles. It's some kind of stuff that grows on a whale and he doesn't like it, so he scrapes it off whenever he can. Sometimes he scrapes up against a ship, and maybe that's what's happened now."

"Well, we can soon see," spoke Frank. "But if it is a whale I hope he doesn't scrape too hard. He might upset this boat."

"Well, we lived through one night, adrift on the ocean," remarked Sammy, as he finished dressing. "Now we'll see what it's like outside."

"It's stopped raining, anyhow," went on Frank. "The storm is over."

"I'm glad of it," remarked Bob. "Now we can eat breakfast without spilling things in our laps."

"That's right—it is time to eat," added Sammy.

"But first let's see what we're bumping into, or what's bumping us," suggested Frank.

The boys were feeling much better now. They had been rested and calmed by their night's rest, and they had slept more soundly than they knew, for they were tired out. Sleep was the best thing for them, as it kept them from worrying.

And they had good cause for worry. Three small boys, who knew little if anything of managing a motor boat, were adrift in one on the big ocean. The only wonder is that they were as brave as they were.

"I wonder what mom thinks?" said Bob, as he slid back the bolt of the cabin door.

"She couldn't help worrying—I know mine would," spoke Sammy. "But I think we'll be rescued to-day. Silas is most likely out looking for us with some of his sailor friends."

"Well, I hope he finds us soon," remarked Frank. "It's all right in books, to read about being adrift at sea, but it isn't so much fun when it comes to you. I'd rather be in Lighthouse Cove."

"So would I!" cried his two chums.

The three Fairview boys went out on the open deck of the *Skip,* and, as they emerged from the cabin a cry of surprise came from all of them. For the motor boat's stern was bumping and rubbing up against the side of a small two-master schooner, which, with some sails set, was drifting about on the ocean, abandoned, and seemingly as much at the mercy of the wind and waves as was the *Skip* herself.

"Would you look at that!" cried Sammy.

"A ship!" gasped Bob.

"And that's your whale!" went on Frank. "Say, how did this happen?"

None of the boys could answer. They looked off across a waste of waters. Not another craft was in sight, and they could not see land. The sun came up, seemingly out of the ocean itself, with the promise of a fair, hot day. And those two vessels—the motor boat and the schooner had, somehow, drifted together.

That was the noise which had awakened Sammy—the gentle collision of the craft in the ocean. Had this happened when

the storm was at its height the smaller boat might have been sunk. But the storm had passed, and the ocean only rose and fell in a gentle swell.

"What brought the two together?" asked Bob.

"The wind and the tide, I guess," said Frank. Later he learned that objects in water have a sort of attraction for one another, as pieces of metal are attracted to a magnet.

If you will take a basin of water, and scatter some pieces of wood or cork on top, and then take care not to move or stir the water, you will find, in a few minutes, that the pieces have drawn themselves together. Sometimes only one or two will do this, and again the whole number will form a mass to float about.

It is this which causes masses of driftwood to float in the form of miniature rafts, and some scientists claim that often ships, which are not under their own power, are thus drawn together in a collision. Some even go so far as to say that a big war vessel, for instance, even in motion, will draw another vessel, also in motion, toward it. And not long ago a collision of a British warship and a merchant vessel was said to be due to this cause.

But the boys did not stop to think of that then—indeed they had heard nothing of it.

All they knew was that their motor boat was up against a much larger and more substantial vessel, and they were glad of this, for they felt, in case of a storm, that they could take refuge on the big schooner.

"How do you s'pose it happened that she got here?" asked Sammy, motioning toward the ship.

"Is there anybody aboard?" was Bob's question.

"Let's go and see," suggested Frank, and this seemed most practical of all.

It was easy to board the schooner from the rail of the motor

boat, as several ropes hung over the side of the larger craft, by means of which the boys could pull themselves up.

"And we'd better do it while we're together," went on Frank. "If we drift apart we might not be able to get together again."

"First let's yell, and see if there's anybody there," suggested Sammy. "They may all be asleep, and might not like it if we went aboard."

"Not very likely that they're asleep," said Frank. "Someone would be on the lookout, anyhow. And there'd be a man steering, with the sails set as they are."

Two of the sails were indeed set, but the main sheets, or ropes, were loose, and the boom swung back and forth with the motion of the vessel, so that, even had the wind been blowing, she would have made little headway. But it was now a dead calm.

"Come on—yell!" suggested Sammy, and the three boys raised their voices in a shout. They waited a moment to see if they would get an answer, but none came.

"Come on—let's go aboard!" cried Frank, as he made for the rail, to reach a dangling rope.

"Wait!" suggested Bob. "Let's tie this motor boat fast, first. We may want to come back in her again."

"Why?" asked Sammy.

"Because, we don't know anything about that schooner," went on Bob. "Maybe all her crew died from smallpox, or something like that. Maybe she's sinking, and we wouldn't want to stay on board if she was. You can't tell what makes her this way. Tie our boat fast, I say, and then, if we want to, we can come back on the *Skip* if we don't like it on the *Mary Ellen,*" for that was the name of the drifting schooner, as they could see painted under her stern.

"Good idea," exclaimed Sammy. "We can live on the

Skip for a while, anyhow, if it doesn't storm again. But let's have a try on this schooner. We'll have more room there, and if it does get rough we won't mind it so."

They all agreed with this plan, and soon a rope from the motor boat was made fast to a cable from the schooner. Then, making sure they would not lose the *Skip,* the boys pulled themselves over the rail of the *Mary Ellen,* and landed on her deck.

They looked about them curiously. There was not a sound except the creaking of ropes in pulley blocks, and the rattle and bang of the sails as they swung to and fro, not being held in check by the main sheets.

"There doesn't seem to be anybody here," said Bob. He spoke in a low voice, as though someone were dead.

"Not a soul," went on Sammy, in the same quiet tones.

The big boom of the forward sail swung across the deck over the heads of the boys. They ducked, but there was no need for it.

"We could make that fast, anyhow," suggested Frank.

"That's right," agreed Bob.

As my old readers know, the boys had sailed in the *Puff* before it was wrecked, and knew a little about such matters.

By hauling on a certain rope they pulled the end of the boom, or the bottom stick to which the sail is fastened, around so that it could not swing so far to either side. Then they did the same with the other sail.

"Come on, let's take a look below," said Frank.

The boys hesitated for a moment, and then started for the companionway, or stairs, that led below.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RESCUE

STANDING at the head of the companionway, the three Fairview boys were in line. Then, in some strange manner, Sammy rather got behind his two chums. Frank noticed this at once.

"What's the matter?" he asked, turning to Sammy. "Are you afraid to go down?"

"No—no—of course not!" exclaimed Sammy, quickly. "But the stairs are so narrow——"

"Pooh, they're wide enough for us three," said Frank. "Here, I'll go first if you like—I'm not afraid."

"Neither am I!" retorted Sammy, as he stepped up between his chums once more.

"Let's all go down together," suggested Bob. "I don't believe that there's anything down there, but——"

Suddenly a deep, hollow groan sounded from somewhere in the lower region of the ship.

"Hark!" cried Sammy.

"Oh, we all heard it!" gasped Bob. "No need to hark! I'm going up on deck."

He turned to go back up the few steps he had come down, and Sammy went with him. Only Frank stood there.

"Say, what's the matter with you two fellows?" he asked.

"But did you hear it?" asked Sammy.

"Sure I heard it," said Frank. "It was——"

But he did not need to describe it, for the sound came again,

a deep, hollow groan that seemed to vibrate all through the schooner.

"There—there's someone down there!" panted Bob.

"Well, what of it?" asked Frank, coolly. He did not seem nearly as frightened as were his chums.

"Then I'm not going down," went on Bob. "Maybe it's somebody hurt."

"That's all the more reason why we ought to go down—he may need help, if it's one of the sailors who couldn't get away when the others went," insisted Frank. "Come on down."

Frank's sensible talk made Bob and Sammy less afraid, and they again took their positions by their chum's side, ready to descend the companionway stairs.

Every once in a while the groan would sound again, but the boys were not so easily frightened now.

As they went down they looked about, but they saw no signs of disorder or confusion which they would have noticed had the captain and crew of the schooner left in a hurry, or after some struggle. Everything was in order, and it looked as if the sailors had just gone ashore in the regular way, leaving the vessel to the wind and sea. Before going down the boys had noticed that there were one or two small boats on the davits, showing that if the crew had left the schooner at sea, they had not taken all the rowing craft with them.

"It's a queer puzzle," said Frank, as he and his chums looked about.

"It sure is," agreed Bob. "I wonder——"

"Hark!" cried Sammy.

Again came that queer, groaning sound, and it was so close at hand that the boys jumped.

"The noise came from there," said Bob, pointing to the captain's stateroom.

"Maybe—maybe he's tied up in there—hurt," suggested Sammy.

"Maybe—and maybe not!" exclaimed Frank with vigor. "I'm going to have a look!"

His chums glanced at him admiringly. After just a moment of hesitation, Frank tried the knob of the stateroom door. The portal swung open easily, and the boys eagerly looked inside. They were rather disappointed, it must be confessed, when they did not see the body of the captain stretched out in his berth, bound with ropes. The stateroom was empty.

"Well, what—what made that groaning noise?" asked Sammy.

The groaning sound came again, and then all three of the boys saw what it was. A chest of drawers made fast to the side of the stateroom, had torn loose, probably when the schooner pitched and tossed in the storm, and this chest, swaying back and forth as the vessel rolled, scraped against the floor, making a groaning, creaking noise that sounded a good deal like a man in pain. Now that the boys were close to it, the sound did not seem quite so weird, but at a little distance almost anyone would have said it was a groan.

"And that's all it was!" exclaimed Sammy.

"Yes," said Frank, "that's usually the way things do turn out."

For a moment the boys stood peering about the small cabin Then Bob said:

"Let's look around a bit more. Maybe we can find somebody, or something, that will tell how the vessel came to be drifting this way."

They opened the other stateroom doors, but inside all was in order. The bunks were made up, and there was no confusion.

"Now for the place where the crew live!" cried Sammy.

"The fo'cas'le!" exclaimed Frank. "I should think you'd know that by this time, Sammy."

But they found nothing in the quarters where the crew ate and slept to explain the mystery. Things were not as nice there as in the cabin, but there was no disorder that would show a hasty flight from the ship. The boys went to the galley, which is the kitchen of a ship, but as they found a big coal range there, and did not want to kindle a fire in that, they decided to get their meals in their own small boat, on the oil stove.

They had now made an inspection of the *Mary Ellen,* and they knew no more about her than at first. It was all a strange mystery of the sea.

"We're going along some," said Frank, as he looked over the side.

A little breeze had sprung up, and, now that the sails of the schooner were set to catch the wind, she went ahead through the waves, pulling the motor boat after her.

"Hadn't we better steer?" asked Bob.

"No, we can tie the wheel fast, while we eat," said Frank. "She'll steer herself then, and we won't have to bother."

"Which way shall we steer?" asked Bob.

"Straight ahead, I say," remarked Frank, who seemed to have taken command. "We don't know where we are, and we don't know which way land is, so one direction is as good as another. It will be easier to steer straight ahead, and we may sight land that way, as well as if we set the rudder to right or left."

To this his chums agreed, and soon the wheel was tied fast, or "lashed" to use the proper sea term. Then the boys pulled on the rope attached to the motor boat, and brought the *Skip* alongside. They could easily get on her raised cabin deck

from the schooner rail, for the larger vessel was not very high in the water.

"Say, hold on," said Frank, when they were about to go aboard. "What's the matter with us bringing our grub up from there, and staying here? It's safer here if it comes on to blow again, and we'll be more comfortable. We can use the captain's cabin, and have more room to move about."

"But it will be a lot of work to cook on that big coal stove," objected Sammy.

"We won't have to. We can hoist the *Skip's* oil stove up here. It isn't very big. There's probably oil aboard here, too. I say let's stay here."

"I do, too!" cried Bob; and so it was arranged. They went aboard the *Skip* to get food, for they did not feel that they should take the stores of the schooner.

Then the oil stove was hauled to the deck of the *Mary Ellen* by means of a rope. Fortunately the sea was very smooth while this was being done, so the boys had little trouble.

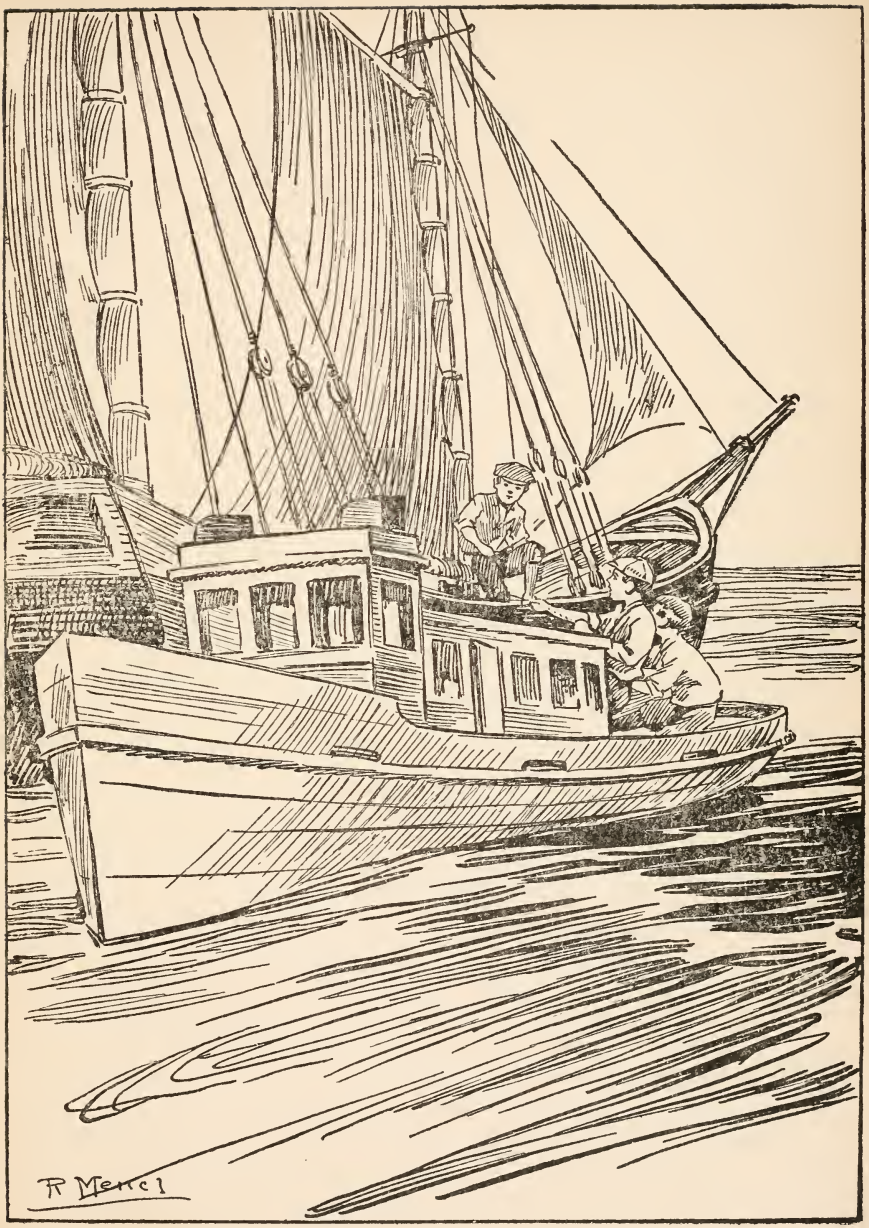
Then, rather tired from their work, and very hungry, they cooked a late breakfast, enjoying it very much.

"This is something like!" cried Frank, as he looked about the cozy cabin. "This is real traveling."

"We're not doing much traveling—we're letting the ship sail herself," remarked Sammy.

"Well, it's all we can do," said Bob. "And maybe we'll be worse off when it comes to a blow. But if only mom knew where we were, and that we were safe, I shouldn't mind. I'm afraid she'll worry, and get sick."

"I hope not," said Frank. "But we stand a better chance now of being picked up. Say, I never thought of it!" he cried. "We must run up a signal of distress. If some other ship sees us now they'll never know we're in trouble. We must run up a signal of distress."



"Let's tie the motor boat fast".

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"How do you do it?" asked Bob.

"The United States flag, upside down, will do," said Sammy, promptly. He had read of that in his books.

"Yes, that will do," agreed Frank. "Come on, let's hunt for a flag."

It did not take them long to find one in the locker where several signal flags were kept, and soon they discovered the right rope by which it could be hoisted to the masthead. It was sent up, with the stars down, and then the boys could only wait and hope.

They made sure that the *Skip* was well fastened to the stern of the schooner, and the rest of the day they spent going about the ship. They found a telescope, and with this they searched the horizon for a sight of other vessels.

They saw several, even without the aid of the glass, but they could not signal to them, any more than they had already done, and the vessels were either too far away, or else paid no attention to the reversed flag on the mast. There was no wind to flutter it, and, naturally, it could not very well be seen from any other ship. The boys would have to trust to chance.

The day passed, night came, and the boys prepared to spend another period of darkness away from the cottage at Lighthouse Cove. True, they were better off than the night before, and there was no storm, but they very much wished to be safe with their folks again.

Slowly drifting before a gentle breeze, the *Mary Ellen* made her way over the water. The boys found lanterns and lighted them, for they knew the danger of being run down in the night if they displayed no signals. They sat up rather late, and watched for the lights of some passing craft, but saw none.

"I know what we can do in the morning if we're not picked up," said Frank.

"What?" asked Sammy.

Make a smudge of smoke on board here. Smoke can be seen a long way, and maybe it will bring us help."

"We'll try it," decided Bob.

They went to bed, but they did not sleep as well as the night before. Morning came, and with it a dense fog.

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Frank. "No one will see us now, and we may be in danger of a collision."

"Can't we do anything?" asked Sammy.

"Yes, we can blow a horn every once in a while, if we can find one, and ring the ship's bell. That's what they always do in a fog."

"Then let's do it!" suggested Sammy.

So while the fog hung about them—a damp, white blanket—the boys tooted the horn, and clanged the bell. This was to warn other vessels not to run into them.

But, though they listened sharply, they heard no sounds that would indicate another vessel to be near them. They seemed all alone on the ocean, and they were more discouraged than before.

True they were not cold, for the day was warm, and they had plenty to eat. They were in a good, stout vessel, too, and in no great danger, unless another storm should come up.

But oh! how they wanted to be back on shore again!

Night came, and still the fog hung down. There was hardly a breath of air, and the *Mary Ellen* rolled on the oily swell of the sea. The night passed slowly, but with the morning came hope.

Soon after sunrise the wind sprang up, and blew away the fog. Then the breeze increased, and the sails filled out. The schooner went along at a fast rate of speed.

"And see!" cried Frank, "our flag shows well now. I'm sure it will be noticed by someone, and we'll soon be rescued."

But the morning passed, and no rescuing ship came to them. The boys, with hearts that were much discouraged, prepared their dinner. They had seen several vessels, but though they waved pieces of sails to attract attention, the other craft did not change their course. They even shouted and blew the big fog horn, but they knew they were too far off to be heard.

"Oh, well, we'll get picked up sometime," said Frank, as cheerfully as he could, "and we've got enough to eat for over a week."

The boys were at dinner in the cabin, and the schooner was going along under the pressure from a wind that was getting more and more strong.

"Pass the beans," asked Sammy, for they had plenty of the canned variety.

"Hark!" exclaimed Frank, pausing midway in reaching the dish over to his chum. "Did you hear anything?"

"I didn't," said Sammy.

"There it goes!" cried Frank. "Listen!"

As they listened intently they all heard a dull boom, coming from somewhere in the distance.

"A cannon!" cried Bob.

"Someone is firing at us!" exclaimed Sammy.

"More likely it's a signal gun!" burst out Frank. "Some ship has seen our distress signal. Come on up deck!"

He rushed from the table, followed by the others. Then, to their surprise and delight, they saw a steamer headed directly for them, and from her bow there shot a puff of white smoke. It was a signal gun she was firing, to let the boys know she was coming to their rescue.

CHAPTER XV

TWO MYSTERIES CLEARED UP

"HEAVE to! Lower your sails and we'll send you a boat!"

Thus came the command through a megaphone from an officer on the deck of the steamer, which had come to a stop not far from the schooner. The steamship had approached as close as she dared.

The boys, all thought of breakfast forgotten now, crowded to the rail, eager for their rescue.

"Lower your sails!" came the command again, for the schooner was still sweeping on.

"That's right—we've got to stop!" shouted Frank. "Come on, fellows, let's let down the sails."

They knew just enough, from having sailed the *Puff,* to loosen the proper ropes. Of course they loosened a good many wrong ones before they got the right ones, but finally the two big sails came limply down.

The *Mary Ellen* slowly lost headway, and rode gently on the surface of the ocean.

"That's right!" came the voice through the megaphone. "Stand by to throw us a rope. I'm sending you a boat."

The rail of the steamer was crowded with passengers who were much interested in the novelty of a rescue at sea. The steamer seemed to be a coast liner, probably engaged in the fruit trade, Frank thought.

In a few minutes a boat, containing several sailors, and someone in command, swept around from the other side of the steamer. It came straight for the schooner, the boys' hearts beating high with hope at each stroke of the oars.

"We're all right now!" cried Bob. "Oh, I hope they have a wireless telegraph on board, so I can send word to my mother!"

Loyal little chap! His first thought was of her whom he knew would be worrying so!

"Oh, there's a wireless all right," said Frank, as he pointed to the wires strung between the signal masts of the steamer.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Bob, and there were tears of joy in his eyes.

"But if they take us on board the steamer, what will we do with the schooner, and the motor boat?" asked Sammy.

"Oh, we won't have to worry about that!" cried Frank. "We've had troubles enough. Now we're going to take it easy!"

The boat containing the sailors came nearer. The officer looked at the three boys curiously. Frank had tossed a rope over the side. The schooner's rail was so low that no accommodation ladder was needed.

"Ahoy there!" called the officer, as the sailors brought the boat broadside to, and one of them held her there by clinging to the rope. "What schooner is that?"

"The *Mary Ellen,*" answered Frank.

"Where from, and where bound?" asked the officer.

"We don't know," replied Frank, with a smile.

"You don't know! Well, who's in command?"

"I guess we are," went on Frank. "We picked her up yesterday, and we've been aboard ever since. She was abandoned."

The officer uttered a whistle of surprise.

"I'll come aboard," he said, a moment later. "Fend off, and stand by until I signal you," he added, to the sailors. The officer, who proved from the lettering on his cap, to be the chief mate, was soon on the deck of the *Mary Ellen,* and then came a series of questions.

Frank and his chums told about all that had happened to them from the time of being blown out to sea in the motor boat until they were seen by the steamer.

"It was your flag, union down, that caught our attention," the mate said. "You're a set of plucky youngsters, and I congratulate you. Now I suppose you'd better come aboard the steamer, unless you want to take this schooner to port yourselves and claim the salvage money," he said with a smile.

"Indeed we do not!" exclaimed Bob. "We've had enough of her. I want to send a wireless message to my mother—quick."

"You can do that all right," said the mate. "Now I'll just have a look about, and see what the ship's papers say. They may solve the mystery. Then we'll go aboard the steamer."

"But what about the *Mary Ellen,* and our motor boat?" asked Sammy.

"Oh, we'll look out for them," promised the mate. "I'll have the captain send a crew aboard the schooner to work her back to port, and they'll tow your motor boat, too. You needn't worry."

The mate went to the schooner-captain's cabin, and got what papers were there. These showed the *Mary Ellen* to be sailing from New York to Savannah, Georgia, with a mixed cargo, but gave no cause for the abandoning of the craft. However, that mystery was explained later.

Leaving one or two of the rowers in charge of the schooner, the mate went back with the three boys in the small boat to the

steamer. There they were received by the captain most kindly, and in his cabin they told their strange story.

"Well, I must say you lads are plucky!" exclaimed the commander. "And you've done yourselves a good turn, too. That schooner has a valuable cargo, and is worth considerable herself. Of course I shall have to lay claim, in the name of the owners of my vessel, to most of the salvage, for my crew will take her to port. But I will see that you boys get your proper share."

Bob and his chums were most surprised by their good luck.

The passengers of the steamer heard the lads' story, and made much of the boys, who were glad indeed to be safe on a vessel that could take them to some place whence they could reach Lighthouse Cove again.

Bob's first thought was to telegraph his mother that they were safe, and soon the wireless was cracking out a message that, when it was received, made Mrs. Bouncer a most happy mother, for it told her that Bob and his chums were all right.

More sailors were sent aboard the schooner to work her to the nearest port, towing the motor boat. Then the steamer started off again, with the boys as passengers. The captain promised to land them at a port where they could get a train back to Lighthouse Cove, and this he did, later in the day, sending them ashore in a launch.

That night Bob and his chums were home again.

By turns the boys told their story.

"Oh, but we were so worried!" exclaimed Mrs. Bouncer. "Of course it wasn't your fault, though. Silas kept telling us that his boat would ride out the storm, but your father has hired a large motor boat and is off searching for you."

But the good news soon reached Mr. Bouncer, for it was telegraphed all along the coast, and he heard it when he put in at a port to get gasolene. Then he hurried back to Barnacle Cottage.

"But what made the schooner abandoned?" asked Bob's father, when he had heard the story. The boys did not know, but a day or so later that mystery was cleared.

It seemed that, just before the storm that sent Bob and his chums to sea, the schooner had put in at a small port for a supply of fresh water, hers having leaked away because of faulty casks. All the crew was given shore leave, and the captain, too, went off to attend to some business. A watchman alone was left in charge, while the *Mary Ellen* was docked.

Then came a small hurricane. A neighboring vessel broke her mooring rope and crowded down on the schooner. The latter parted her cable and swung out into the channel. Then the wind caught her and sent her to sea, much as the boys had been blown. In the confusion that followed no one thought of trying to save the *Mary Ellen* and away she went without a soul aboard, for the watchman had fallen overboard while trying to lower the sails. He was not, however, drowned.

So, after all, there was not much of a mystery about the schooner. She was claimed by her captain and crew, and her owners gladly paid the salvage money, of which our young heroes received their proper share. Their parents put it in the bank for them.

A few days later Silas Warner got back his motor boat, which had been only slightly damaged.

"Well, that's over," said Sammy, a few days after their return from their unexpected voyage to sea. "Now if we could only find the pirate gold, we'd be all right."

"Oh, you're foolish!" exclaimed Frank. "There never was any pirate gold."

"Well, what was Professor Watson digging for?" demanded Sammy.

"I don't know," said Frank, "But it wasn't gold."

"There he is now, digging again," said Bob, quickly, "and he's on our beach, too. I guess now we've got a right to ask him what he's after."

Rather bashfully the boys approached the old man. He paid no attention to them, but went on digging. Suddenly he was observed to throw aside his shovel, make a grab for something in the sand, and then he cried out:

"I have it! I have it! At last I have found it!"

Eagerly the boys rushed forward. The man did not seem to notice them, but was closely looking at something in his hand.

"Have you found the pirate gold?" asked Bob, boldly.

The man looked at the boys. He did not seem annoyed now.

"Gold! No, I wasn't looking for gold," he said. "But I have found a very rare kind of seashell for which I have been searching all Summer. At last my scientific collection is complete. My search is ended!"

The boys did not know what to think.

"Weren't you looking for gold?" asked Sammy, much amazed.

"Gold! No, I care nothing for gold. I am a college professor and from my studies I decided that a certain rare seashell was to be found on this coast. I came here, and dug in many places for it. I even dug at night, for the creature that lives in this shell is said to prefer to feed at night. But I never had any luck until now."

"Then you know nothing about pirates," said Sammy, sadly.

The professor looked curiously at them.

"Ah, I have seen you boys before," he said, musingly.

"Yes, we followed you once," said Frank.

"I remember now. And I drove you away. I did not mean to be impolite, but this shell is a very delicate one, and you were walking over the land where I thought I might find

one. I feared you would crush it. That is why I asked you to leave. But it is all right now. See, I have the treasure," and he showed the boys a curious pink and blue shell in his hand. To them it did not amount to much, but probably to the scientist it was very valuable.

The boys asked the professor about the night they had met him when the lighthouse beacon was out. He explained that he had just received word from an old fisherman, one of several he had told of his quest, with a command to kept it secret, that some sort of shells, very like the one the scientist wanted, might be found in a certain place. There the professor went, taking a light with him, and it was thus the boys met him.

"And so ends that mystery," murmured Bob.

"Well, I'm glad it's over," said Frank. "Maybe now you can think of something else besides pirate gold, Sammy, and we can have some fun."

"Yes, it's all over," said Sammy. "I wonder what will happen next?"

And what did occur I will relate to you in the next volume of this series, to be called "Fairview Boys on a Ranch; Or, Riding with the Cowboys."

But the days at Lighthouse Cove were not yet over. There still remained some glorious Summer weather and the boys enjoyed it to the utmost. They went swimming, crabbing and boating, but they never again went so near the inlet that they were in danger of being carried out to sea. And they neither looked for nor found the pirate gold although they did find some very pretty seashells.

And now we will take leave of the Fairview boys.

THE END.

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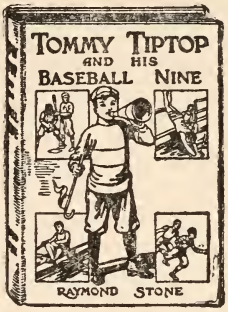

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